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Ukrainian prez Zelensky says talks with Russia and US seeking to end Moscow's invasion are 'difficult', and **accuses Russian team of delaying process.** P 16

A judge in New Zealand who discovered last week that apology letters from a defendant in an arson case were written with the help of AI **raises questions about the sincerity of her sentiments.** P 16

Canada is witnessing a sharp slowdown in new int'l student arrivals, according to recent data. Against 2.9 lakh student arrivals in 2024, the number has dropped sharply to 1.1 lakh, a decline of about 61%. P 16

Real Madrid's Vinicius Jr scores a superb second-half goal to secure a 1-0 victory at Benfica in their Champions League playoff first leg in a **match overshadowed by an alleged racist incident** that led to 11-min stoppage. P 18

K'taka rolls out ₹550cr plan, trash strike called off

Karnataka govt Wednesday night announced a Rs 600-crore infrastructure package in landfill villages. This assurance ended the standoff between the civic body and the villagers. Officials hoped normalcy would return in garbage-disposal operations which had come to a halt at Bellahalli dumpsite for two days. The number of vehicles going to landfill sites will be reduced in the coming months, an official said. P 2

TN report wants guvs 'defanged'

Justice Kurian Joseph Committee report on Centre-state relations, which was tabled in TN assembly Wednesday, pitched for diminished powers for the governor and a constitutional amendment that binds the President to pick governors from an assembly-vetted list. TNN

5 mystery deaths in Bihar, probe ordered

Authorities launched a probe following reports of at least five deaths among attendees of a wedding function on Feb 14 in a village in Bihar's Buhras district. There was speculation over whether any of the deaths were due to consumption of liquor or dog bite. TNN

Navy cadets to get 'floating classrooms'

Indian naval cadets will get dedicated "floating classrooms" at sea as the Navy has launched 'INS Krishna', which has been designed to provide cadets with hands-on experience in navigation, seamanship and watch-keeping. INS Krishna can accommodate 300 cadets. TNN

DGCA moots faster ban on unruly flyers

Aviation regulator DGCA has proposed stricter norms to deal with unruly passengers in a draft proposal, allowing airlines to directly impose a 30-day ban on a disruptive flyer. Under current norms, airlines have to refer any incident to an independent committee. P 5

Woman, baby burned to death

A 35-year-old woman, along with her one-year-old boy in her arms, was burned to death by a group of people at Kalaiya village in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district on suspicion of practising witchcraft late Tuesday. Police have arrested four suspects. TNN

Know Nerene Karnataka?

SCAN THE O!

Scan the QR & answer the quiz question. Correct answer will be revealed tomorrow!

Yesterday's answer: Viswanathan Anand

EU leaders back early trade pact, AI cooperation in meetings with Modi

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: After hosting French President Emmanuel Macron in Mumbai, PM Modi held bilateral meetings on Wednesday with leaders of Spain, Finland, Estonia, Croatia and Slovenia, looking for her deepen cooperation in technology, innovation, security and defence with Europe, which is participating in strength in the ongoing AI Impact Summit. With 26 countries officially represented, this is the largest ever presence of European countries at a technology-based event in India, according to official sources.

In the official talks, EU leaders/members conveyed their unanimous support for early implementation of the India-EU FTA. They are also learned to have pledged support for its early ratification in the European Council and European Parliament.

"They are all keen to enhance trading ties with India taking advantage of the FTA, creating new opportunities and jobs for people," said a govt source.

At Modi's meeting with Spainish PM Pedro Sanchez, the two endorsed ongoing defence cooperation, welcoming progress in Tata-Airbus collaboration for C-295 transport aircraft final assembly line in Vadodara and stressing the importance of defence industrial collaboration based on co-development and co-production. Sanchez highlighted the importance of the AI Summit and expressed confidence that its outcomes would contribute meaningfully to shaping global AI governance, while backing closer India-Spain cooperation to leverage AI's potential for industrie development and societal benefit.

"They reiterated their strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and emphasised the need for strengthened international cooperation to combat terrorism," said a govt readout, adding that both PMs hailed the India-EU FTA as a major milestone that would help unlock immense trade and investment potential.

Modi is expected to meet leaders from the Netherlands, Switzerland, Greece, Slovak Republic and Liechtenstein over the next two days.

For India, a solid European presence was the essential ingredient for a successful AI summit, as Europe remains a hub of cutting-edge AI innovation, digital governance and responsible AI frameworks. Govt officials pointed out that EU plays a prominent role in setting global norms, including for AI, and is also the first bloc globally to enact comprehensive AI legislation. While France is playing a key role in AI governance and applications and UK had organised the first AI summit in 2023, the Netherlands and Belgium host critical companies in the semiconductor supply chain like ASML and IMEC, respectively.

▶ AI-led growth, P 10

FULL COVERAGE: P 10 & 13
▶ EDIT PAGE: Is AI Good For Democracy?

PM Modi hosted dinner for world leaders on Wednesday. He will welcome them at Bharat Mandapam Thursday and deliver his address

Expo extended till Sat, closed to public today

With strict access restrictions announced for Thursday, the organisers have decided to keep the AI Impact Expo shut for the over 3 lakh registered participants and instead open it on Saturday. The expo was originally scheduled to conclude on Friday, alongside the formal close of the summit. Electronics and IT secretary S Krishnan said the extension will allow more students, professionals and general visitors to experience the exhibits once security restrictions are lifted. TNN

'Nations may end up victims of US, China monopoly'

Yoshua Bengio, widely considered one of the godfathers of AI, said current AI frontier models are developed by a handful of companies and in countries such as US and China, while most other nations are "passive victims of things they built". "That could give those two countries or whoever is leading huge economic power, but also political and military power. And the stability we've known since WWII could just go up in flames," he said. P 10

Vaishnaw: Need to balance AI devpt, regulation

There is a need to strike a balance between AI innovation and regulation, IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, asserting that the govt will use a mix of technical regulations and laws. Given that innovations have a long runway, heavy regulations may not be required at this stage. "This is probably the first innings of the first match of a Test series," he said. He also said discussions are under way on restricting access of children to social media. P 10

Bandipur, Nagarahole safaris resume today; op hours trimmed

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: More than three months after safari operations were banned in Bandipur and Nagarahole tiger reserves due to rising human-wildlife conflicts, the state govt on Wednesday gave green signal to restart rides from Thursday with several safety conditions.

Now, safari hours at Bandipur have been reduced from eight to five hours. In Nagarahole, safaris will operate for six hours on the Sunkadakatte side and four hours in the main reserve. Night operations of safari vehicles will remain banned.

The decision comes a month after CM Siddaramaiah ordered phased reopening of safaris in the tiger reserves. Forest minister Eshwar Khandre said safaris were suspended on Nov 7, 2025 after three consecutive attacks by tigers.

An expert committee, led by the principal chief conservator of forests (wildlife), assessed the ecological carrying capacity of the reserves and recommended scientific regulation of eco-tourism activities.

"Safari trips will be resumed subject to fulfilment of these conditions," the forest minister said.

▶ 'Develop local area', P 2

▶ REBOOTING SAFARIS: P 2

NIGHT BAN ON

- Govt **banned safaris** in Bandipur and Nagarahole tiger reserves **due to rising human-wildlife conflicts**
- Services to resume with several **safety conditions; night operations of safari** vehicles will remain **banned**
- Panel has recommended installation of **engine-linked GPS devices and dash cameras** in safari vehicles

REDUCED SAFARI HOURS

- Bandipur: **5hrs/day**
- Sunkadakatte: **5hrs/day**
- Nagarahole: **4hrs/day**

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Galgotias Univ asked to vacate expo stall after row over Chinese robot display

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: It was supposed to be its date with fame on a global stage, but turned out to be a moment of embarrassment for the Greater Noida-based Galgotias University, which also left organisers of the India AI Impact Summit red-faced.

The private institution was asked to pack its bags and leave the summit's expo zone at Bharat Mandapam after a robotic dog it tom-tommed as an in-house innovation turned out to be a made-in-China project available online.

MeitY secretary S Krishnan said the organisers took a firm view as they did not want any controversy around exhibits at the Expo. "We want genuine exhibits. We don't want a controversy over exhibits in the expo or to encourage plagiarism. The issue is about misleading and the claim to have made something which they have not," Krishnan said.

At the heart of the matter is infrastructure. Pichai reiterated Google's previously announced $15 billion AI hub in Visakhapatnam, which will house gigawatt-scale compute capacity and a new international subsea cable gateway.

"It's an extraordinary moment; we are investing to meet the moment," said Pichai, who is among top global tech chiefs in the capital for the AI Impact Summit.

▶ Talent pipeline, P 10

The robot dog was presented by the university as 'Orion'

▶ EDIT: GalgotAI, P 14

▶ Robot quite naughty, P 11

Pichai: Google plans new US-India subsea cable initiative to boost AI link

Supriya.Roy@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Google Wednesday announced the "America-India Connect" initiative that will see it set up a subsea cable link connecting the country with the US, building upon its plan to invest $15 billion in a data centre and strengthening the technical ties between the world's largest search engine giant and the country with the most internet users.

"AI is the biggest platform shift of our lifetimes," Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai said at a media briefing, calling it "one of the most powerful tools to solve problems and improve lives at planetary scale". Pichai announced the plan after meeting PM Modi on Wednesday afternoon.

Google CEO Sundar Pichai meets PM Modi in New Delhi Wednesday

'Bail, not jail' norm can't be applied in financial scams, says apex court

New Delhi: Given the proliferation of financial scams through ponzi schemes, Supreme Court has ruled that courts must take care of the public's hard-earned money falls in the category of heinous crimes and that the accused in such offences cannot claim benefit of the liberty-leaning principle of 'bail is the rule and jail the exception'.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Kumar and K Vinod Chandran set aside an order of Allahabad HC that had granted bail to the main accused in a cheating-cum-forgery case — who absconded for a long period — on the grounds that his co-accused have been granted bail and it is a cheating case triable by a magistrate, thus categorising it as a non-heinous offence. "We may note that the value of life and liberty of members of society is not limited only to their 'person', but would also extend to the quality of their life, including their economic well-being," said Justice Kumar. TNN

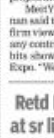
▶ Court talks tough, P 11

IN THE COURTS

- On a plea highlighting an allegedly racially-motivated attack that led to death of Anjel Chakma, **SC says those who attack people for their appearance, language, race or place of origin must be dealt with an iron hand** | P 11
- **SC stays exhumation of bodies** of tribal Christians in Chhattisgarh villages | P 11
- Nagpur bench of Bombay **HC holds that summons on WhatsApp is legally valid** | P 9

Retd Isro staffer at sr living centre in B'luru kills wife

A 76-year-old former Isro employee allegedly smothered his wife to death and had planned to end his own life, but did not go through with it. Accused, Nageshwar Rao, was reportedly undergoing treatment for psychological issues, police said. The incident occurred at a senior living community in Bengaluru's Whitefield. "I may not live for more than 3-4 years. Who'll look after her after my death?" he told cops. Rao has been arrested on charges of murder. After the crime, Rao called a neighbour and told him he had killed his wife. The couple's only child resides in the United States. P 3



'SIXY' SHIVAM HELPS INDIA END 1ST ROUND UNBEATEN

SEE PAGE: 17

SUPER 8 LINE-UP TAKES SHAPE

12 teams have been eliminated as the T20 World Cup 2026 enters its business end. The 8 remaining teams will now be clubbed into the 2 following groups:

GROUP 1: India, Zimbabwe, West Indies, South Africa

GROUP 2: Pakistan, Sri Lanka, England, New Zealand

Each team will play the others in its group once. No points or net run rate from the first round will be carried into the Super 8

INDIA'S MATCHES (ALL GAMES AT 7PM IST)

FEB 22: vs South Africa (Ahmedabad)
FEB 26: Vs Zimbabwe (Chennai)
MARCH 1: Vs West Indies (Kolkata)

TOP PERFORMERS IN FIRST ROUND

RUN SCORERS

1. **Sahibzada Farhan** (Pak) **Runs:** 226, Avg 73.3
2. **Aiden Markram** (South Africa) **Runs:** 178, Avg: 59.3
3. **Ishan Kishan** (India) **Runs:** 176, Avg: 44.0

WICKET TAKERS

1. **S van Schalkwyk** (US) **Wickets:** 13, Avg 7.8
2. **Varun Chakravarthy** (India) **Wkts:** 9, Avg: 6.9
3. **Michael Leask** (Scotland) **Wickets:** 9, Avg: 13.6

> **Shivam Dube hit a career-best 66 off 31 balls,** including six sixers & four fours, and took 2/35 as India (193/8) overcame a stuttering start against Netherlands (176/7) to post a **17-run victory**

> India thus completed their matches in the first round undefeated, but there will be some **concern about the struggles of their famed batting line-up** against Associate nations US, Namibia and Netherlands

Tarique: Religious beliefs, ideologies may differ but Bangladesh belongs to all

Ahsan Tasnim

Dhaka: Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on Wednesday said his govt believes that the State belongs to all citizens, irrespective of their political views, religion and ideologies, and asserted that his BNP govt's priority would be to restore peace and security through stronger law enforcement and anti-corruption measures.

"The rights of all Bangladeshis are equal," said Tarique — who is BNP chairman — in his maiden address to the nation after becoming PM. The broadcast seemed to be a pitch for political reconciliation after a bitterly fought parliamentary election and an attempt to reassure religious minorities, who have been feeling insecure after a series of attacks targeting them in the wake of the regime change in 2024.

> Restoring peace and security in the minds of people by improving law and order and strictly controlling corruption is the priority of our govt... The rule of law — not party or political influence or coercion — will be the final word in running the State
> — PM Tarique Rahman

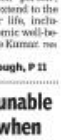
▶ Tough road ahead, P 16

Mallya 'unable to say when he will return'

Mumbai: Vijay Mallya, founder of the defunct Kingfisher Airlines, is "unable to precisely state when he will return to India," his solicitors said in a statement on his behalf before the Bombay HC, reports Swati Deshpande.

He is entitled to challenge the validity of provisions of the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act without being present in India and, following orders passed by courts in England, he is "not permitted to leave or attempt to leave England and Wales, or apply for or be in possession of any international travel document", the statement said.

▶ It was not signed, P 11



Bengaluru leads India's fresher hiring rebound

New Delhi: At a time when headlines are dominated by concerns over AI-driven job losses, there is some good news for those ready to enter the job market. India's entry-level hiring is looking up, with 75% of employers planning to hire freshers between Jan and June 2026, a 3% jump from the previous half year, reports **Manash Gohain.**

From a city-wise lens, Bengaluru tops fresher hiring intent at 84%, supported by IT services, start-ups and engineering firms. Mumbai follows at 72%, driven by retail, FMCG and healthcare.

▶ Across sectors, P 13

67-year wait ends, J&K storm into first Ranji Trophy final, set to take on K'taka on Tuesday

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Lucknow: Some 67 years after making their debut in Ranji Trophy, Jammu and Kashmir stunned Bengal by six wickets on Wednesday to storm into their first-ever final — a landmark in the state's cricketing journey and a testament to how belief and hard work pay rich dividends in the long run.

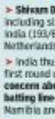
Jammu and Kashmir are set to take on Karnataka — whose berth in the final is all but confirmed — for the title clash beginning on Tuesday. Karnataka, eight-time champions, are hosting the final, though the venue is yet to be finalised.

This season of Ranji has been a display board of underdogs standing up to established powers. In Lucknow, Uttarakhand's dream run met a reality check. First-time semifinalists, they were overwhelmed by Karnataka, who carry an imposing 800-run lead into the final day at Ekana Cricket Stadium here on Thursday. Only formalities remain before Karnataka's place in the title clash is officially confirmed.

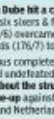
The big clash promises a compelling contrast. Karnataka, who last won the title in the 2014-15 season, bring pedigree and depth, while J&K will arrive with momentum and hunger.

MEN BEHIND THE MILESTONE: THE TEAM'S KEY PERFORMERS

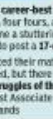
Auqib Nabi: The medium-pacer took 12 wickets (7/44 & 5/70) against MP in the quarterfinal, and 9 (5/87 & 4/36) in the semifinal. Nabi has a ₹1.4cr IPL deal with Delhi Capitals. Will an India Test call-up follow?
Matches This Season: 9, **Wkts:** 55, **Avg:** 12.7, **Economy Rate:** 2.7, **Strike Rate:** 28.5



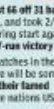
Sunil Kumar: The left-arm medium-pacer has been the perfect foil to Nabi. His 3/41 & 4/27 in the semis proved crucial.
Matches: 8, **Wkts:** 29, **Avg:** 25.1, **ER:** 2.6, **SR:** 34.9



Abdul Samad: The middle-order batter's composure under pressure has seen him pull off several rescue acts. In the semis, he first slammed 82, then scored an unbeaten 30 off 27 balls to finish a tricky chase.
Matches: 9, **Runs:** 655, **Avg:** 59.5



Paras Dogra: The skipper has led with both bat and tactical acumen. Fittingly, the 41-yr-old has become only the 2nd batter to cross 10,000 runs in the Ranji Trophy. **Matches:** 9, **Runs:** 551, **Avg:** 42.4



I-T probe into Hyd biryani joints blows lid off multi-cr tax scam

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Hyderabad: An investigation into biryani restaurant chains in Hyderabad has blown the lid off a tax-evasion scam in the food and beverages industry that runs into thousands of crores.

By analysing 60 terabytes of transactional data of a pan-India billing software used by more than one lakh restaurants, the income-tax department's Hyderabad investigation unit has revealed that these eateries suppressed sales turnover of Rs 70,000cr since 2019-20. Officials are yet to calculate the tax with penalty. They added that the software they tracked controls about 10% of the total restaurant billing software market.

Investigators used big data analysis and AI tools, including Generative AI, to crunch the data spanning 1.77 lakh restaurant IDs. Across India, the software provider recorded many forms of suppression.

- Docus also revealed a pattern of **selective deletion of cash invoices,** and **wiping bills clean for a chosen date range**
- **Karnataka tops (₹2,800cr),** followed by Telangana (₹1,500cr) and TN (₹1,200cr)
- Up to **27% sales likely hidden**

post-billing deletions, one of the many forms of sales suppression, totalling Rs 33,317cr out of the Rs 70,000cr.

A similar biryani-related Rs 40-crore fraud was unearthed near Bengaluru two years ago.

▶ Suppression of sales, P 11

'₹70,000CR TURNOVER HIDDEN'

- I-T analysed **60TB data from a pan-India billing software** controlling 10% of the market; found **₹70k cr suppressed turnover since 2019-20** in food & beverages industry
- Using AI/GenAI, I-T scanned 1.77 lakh restaurant IDs; **identified ₹33,317cr in post-billing deletions,** one of the

TRASH WAR: TWO-DAY BLOCKADE BY VILLAGERS TURNS CITY STREETS INTO WASTE HEAPS

Garbage standoff ends as govt rolls out ₹550cr cleanup plan

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Bengaluru: The two-day-old stalemate between the civic body and landfill villages over infrastructure development funds ended late Wednesday night with the state govt announcing a Rs 550-crore package.

The move, officials hoped, would restore normalcy in garbage-disposal operations which had come to a halt at Bellahalli dumpsite for the past two days following protests from residents over broken roads and failing health.

Nearly 606 families live in Bellahalli and Mittaganahalli, where the landfill gets 1,500 tonnes of waste from Bengaluru every day.

Nearly 600 families live in Bellahalli and Mittaganahalli, where the landfill gets 1,500 tonnes of waste from Bengaluru every day

LANDFILL PROTEST

receives close to 1,500 tonnes of waste from Bengaluru every day. The blockade had ripple effects across Bengaluru. Several neighbourhoods — parts of Kalasipalya, JP Nagar, Kenanakunte, RR Nagar, HTM Layout, Sahakaranagar, Rajajinagar, Beeseshwaranagar and Kamanahalli, among others — reported waste was not collected. Buckets and garbage bags were seen piled outside homes and on street corners, raising fears of fresh blackspots emerging across the city.

The authorities, including deputy CM DK Shivakumar, did some tough talking initially. However, residents refused to budge. "We are living next to 1,500 tonnes of garbage every day. The smell is unbearable, groundwater is polluted and we don't have a regular drinking water supply," said Gangesh Manjunath, a resident of Mittaganahalli.

"We depend on tankers for daily water. If the govt can dump the city's waste here, can it not provide us with basic facilities," said Lakshmamma Gowda, another village; adding, "For years, we have asked for proper roads, drinking water, and health facilities. They remember us only when they want to send garbage trucks. This protest is our last resort."

Not wanting the garbage issue to spiral out of control, Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Wednesday night assured release of funds. "Village development funds have been allocated as follows and an order has been issued: Rs 90 crore each for Mahadevapura, Byatarayanapura and Yeshwantpur; Rs 50 crore for Anekal; Rs 20 crore for Bengaluru South; and Rs 10 crore for Doddaballapur. In phase 2, Byatarayanapura and Mahadevapura will receive an additional Rs 100 crore each," said Kari Gowda, CEO of BSWML.

"We have also taken a decision to minimise the number of vehicles going to the landfill in the coming months and to confine waste transportation in a more regulated manner," Gowda added.

There is a huge quantity of organic and mixed waste being dumped here. Because of this, leachate is being generated, and it is contaminating our borewells. We do not even have safe drinking water anymore. Our homes are filled with mosquitoes, and we can barely keep our doors and windows open. When the deputy chief minister visited us, he said they were aware of the issue but did not know where else to dump the waste. How are we supposed to know if the govt does not know?

Chennakrishna V | FORMER PANCHAYAT MEMBER OF MITTAGANAHALLI AND RESIDENT

There is leachate stagnating near our workplace and residential areas. Every day, we have to use mosquito coils in our sumps. Even then, we can barely breathe because of the stench. There are heavy mosquito infestations and there is no clean drinking water. Many have skin irritation and itching. There are no proper roads. Nothing is being done despite our complaints

Ramanji RT | STONECRUSHER-SUPERVISOR AND RESIDENT OF MITTAGANAHALLI

There is a horrible smell across the area, and even lakes are filled with leachate. There are seven layouts here. Many of us are farmers and our lands are affected. Our agricultural fields are suffering due to infestation and pollution. We depend on water tankers, spending Rs 700 a week. But this is not sustainable. Mixed waste, including animal waste, is another serious problem

Syed Mazhar | PRIVATE SAFA LORRY FROM MITTAGANAHALLI

Rebooting safaris: Ensuring eco-tourism and livelihood

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Bengaluru: The state govt's decision to resume tiger safaris at Bandipur and Nagarahole tiger reserves with immediate effect comes in response to pressures from the eco-tourism sector and those affected by suspension of safari operations announced on Nov 7, 2025.

The forest department had suspended safaris following three consecutive tiger attacks on humans in Mysuru and Chamarajanagar districts in Oct-Nov 2025. The move came amid concern raised by National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) over the capture of 25 tigers from the same landscape from Sept to Dec 2025.

Although no fresh attacks were reported during the suspension period, the prolonged closure triggered protests, particularly in HD Kote taluk of Mysuru district, as thousands dependent on tourism saw their livelihoods hit. The controversy also intensified as neighbouring Tamil Nadu and Kerala witnessed a tourism spillover. "Thousands of citizens, farmers and resort staffers in and around HD Kote taluk staged protests and demanded restart of safari. Hence, we are resuming the safari trips with immediate effect in a phased manner to ensure both lives and livelihood of the people are safeguarded," said forest minister Eshwar Khandre.

Preventive measures introduced after the suspension helped curb incidents. "After suspending the safari, several measures were introduced... no attack on humans was reported over the past two months. The chief wildlife warden also recommended reopening of safari," he said.

Clarifying on shortage of front-line staffers in these tiger reserves with the phased reopening of safaris Khandre said, "Only 50% of existing staff and vehicles will be used for safari operations, while the rest will will be deployed for patrolling and surveillance along forest boundaries to keep an eye on the possible human-animal conflict situations."

File photo

The forest department had announced suspension of safaris on Nov 7, 2025 following three consecutive tiger attacks on humans in Mysuru and Chamarajanagar districts in Oct-Nov 2025

CARRYING CAPACITIES PER DAY

Details	Bandipur	Sunkadakatte	Nagarahole
Visitor capacity	800	762	320
Trip capacity	104	143	57
Trips permitted	31	8	18
Average safari time	2.5 hours	1 hours	2 hours
Timings	6:30am - 9am 3:30pm - 6pm	6:30am - 9:30am 3pm - 6pm	7am - 9am 3pm - 5pm

Min: One-third of revenue will be spent to develop local area

▶ Continued from page 1

"The committee further recommended installation of engine-linked GPS devices and dash cameras in safari vehicles in two months.

The committee comprised experts from IISc, Dehradun-based Wildlife Institute of India and Bhopal-based Indian Institute of Forest Management. They made recommendations with an objective of protecting the lives and livelihood of the local population.

The minister further said that one-third of the safari revenue will be spent on local area development, including skill training for forest-fringe villagers, fodder cultivation, and environmental improvement.

As trucks queue up, DKS threatens to dump waste at BJP MLAs' doorsteps

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Bengaluru: A long queue of garbage trucks and auto-tippers lined the road to Bellahalli landfill after being stopped from dumping waste, turning the stretch into a flashpoint of civic disruption. The impasse quickly snowballed into a political sparring match Wednesday, with the opposition BJP accusing the govt of mismanaging waste disposal and the Congress hitting back with counter-allegations.

Opposition leader R Ashoka alleged that the city is on the brink of a sanitation crisis, with heaps of garbage lying uncleared across several localities. "For the last three days, Outer Ring Road has been lined with heaps of garbage. Compactors and auto-tippers are standing in queues. The Congress is not handling the issue properly, and contractors have not been paid," he alleged.

"If this continues for two more days, Bengaluru will turn into a garbage city. Congress will be responsible for giving it that title," he said, urging the govt to immediately release pending funds and clear the accumulated waste.

Shivakumar, while pointing out that the landfills were located in constituencies represented by BJP MLAs, charged the party with obstructing essential civic services and attempting to "blackmail" the govt by preventing garbage trucks from entering designated dumping sites. While directing the elected representatives to behave properly, he asked: "If they keep opposing disposal in their constituency, where do we dispose it? We will have to send to the homes of Ashoka and BY Vijayendra (state BJP president)." If the problem continues, the govt will initiate action under Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA), he warned.

On allegations of accidents involving garbage trucks, Shivakumar acknowledged lapses. "If an accident took place, legal action will follow. The accident should not have happened, but it occurred. However, stopping garbage trucks in this backdrop is not correct," he said.

The DCM added that from Thursday morning, trucks will be directed to dumping sites in the constituencies of MLA ST Somashekar and minister Krishna Byre Gowda in Bengaluru, noting that the process was not new and followed earlier as well.

He said the govt purchased two locations for waste dumping and called for tenders in accordance with the law, adding that certain legal issues were being addressed.

File photo

UGLY PICTURE: Opposition leader R Ashoka alleged the city is on the brink of a sanitation crisis, with heaps of garbage lying uncleared across several localities

FIRs to leave out victims' real names in rape and Pocso cases

Times News Network

Bengaluru: State police hereafter are advised not to mention names of victims in rape and Protection of Children Against Sexual Offences Act cases, says a circular from director general and inspector general of police MA Saleem.

The circular states, "In the FIR, the real names of the victims must not be recorded. Only the substituted names or initials shall be mentioned clearly, along with a note stating the names have been changed." According to Saleem, the Supreme Court earlier clearly mentioned that, under any circumstances, names or other details of victims in rape and Pocso cases should not be revealed. "It is observed that station house-officers (SHO) and investigating officers are still disclosing the names, addresses and other details of the victims in the FIRs and other reports, thereby failing to maintain confidentiality," he said.

According to the guidelines, original complaints can contain the real names, addresses and other details of women and minors. After receiving the complaint, the SHO or investigating officer must assign a substitute name or initials, replacing the original. "The original complaint, along with details of the substituted names, must be submitted to the courts in a sealed cover. All further proceedings shall be conducted using the substitute name or initials," the circular read.

DGP's circular

- Statements of witnesses recorded during investigation may contain the real name of the victim for official purposes. Such statements should be kept in a sealed cover
- In the charge sheet, details containing the real identity, addresses and other details of the victims may be included for framing charges against the accused
- A separate charge sheet copy with substituted names or initials must be prepared. The court shall be requested to provide the redacted copy to the accused and the prosecution

As roadwork drags on, vendors turn bus shelter into clothing outlet

MAKESHIFT SOLUTION: Local vendors sell clothes at a bus shelter on Neelasandra-Rose Garden Road in central Bengaluru

Times News Network

Bengaluru: For nearly two years now, the familiar rumble of buses has been missing from Neelasandra-Rose Garden Road in central Bengaluru. With the road dug up by civic agencies and bus services along the route diverted, the once-bustling bus shelter has vetaken on a different look.

Some local traders have converted one of them into a clothes shop. Where commuters once queued clutching bus passes, shirts and trousers now hang in neat rows.

The transformation unfolded over nearly two years of continuous roadworks carried out by BWSSB and GBA. Residents said the road was in poor condition even before the works began, but repeated trenching and delays eventually pushed BMTC to stop operating buses on the stretch altogether. "For a long time now, buses have stopped coming here," said Sunjith Dhinda, who sold samosas near Neelasandra bus stand for over seven years. "Earlier, this place used to be crowded all day. Because of BWSSB works, buses stopped coming. Now, I don't see a bus here and the bus stop itself has turned into a shop."

Manoj Kumar, a clothing seller, said: "There has been no bus here for a long time. Since we found this place free, we hang our clothes at the bus stand. Nobody objected to us yet. We are only trying to earn a living. When the road is repaired and buses start coming back, we will shift. Till then, this place is just lying empty."

A GBA official said they will expedite road restoration work.

—Syeda Tuhaer Hussain

13°C to 31°C: Weather flip-flop leaves Bengalureans sniffling and wheezing

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Bengaluru: The city's once-predictable weather has turned capricious. Mornings now arrive with a sharp chill — temperatures dipping to 13-14°C — only for afternoons to climb swiftly to a sweltering 31°C. The stark swing within a matter of hours is driving an uptick in visits to clinics across neighbourhoods.

Doctors report a noticeable surge in respiratory illnesses, including bronchitis, viral flu, persistent cough, sore throat and fever, as residents struggle to adapt to the daily temperature fluctuations. For patients living with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and asthma, the shifting conditions have triggered flare-ups, worsening breathlessness and other symptoms. There's a rise in skin infections, fatigue and occasional fainting spells.

"Bengaluru is experiencing noticeable temperature variations, with mornings significantly cooler than afternoons — a pattern often linked with weather-related illnesses. Sudden drops in early morning temperatures and relatively warm days favour the spread of seasonal viruses and respiratory illnesses, especially during seasonal transitions. We are seeing more cases of viral flu, persistent cough, sore throat, and fever, which are commonly viral in origin," said Dr Darshana Reddy, senior consultant – internal medicine and medical superintendent, Aliths Hospital.

"Compared to last year, we're seeing a 50% rise in such cases. On an average day, we now consult 30-35 patients, reflecting a rise in both outpatient visits and inpatient admissions. This surge is largely driven by sharp weather fluctuations, worsening air pollution, and unhealthy dietary habits," said Dr Ajay HR, consultant in internal medicine, Prakriya Hospitals.

Experts said frequent temperature shifts disrupt the body's thermoregulation and weaken immunity. Low humidity and dry air further dry out the mucous membranes of the nose and throat, reducing protection against infections. "The body normally maintains a stable internal temperature through thermoregulation. However, continuous variation forces it to work harder to release and retain heat, leading to fatigue, inadequate sleep, and physiological stress. This weakens immunity and increases susceptibility to viral infections," said Dr Mahesh R Nodagonda, consultant in internal medicine, Sammpada Hospital.

Doctors note children's immunity is still developing, while older adults — particularly those with diabetes, asthma or COPD — are more sensitive to temperature swings. "Working adults who commute daily are also vulnerable due to exposure to harsh weather and pollution," Dr Mahesh added.

Apart from infections, fluctuating temperatures are aggravating lung conditions. "People with asthma, bronchitis, or wheezing are seeing worsening symptoms, sometimes lasting 4 to 6 weeks," said Dr Leeni Mehta, senior consultant physician at Apollo Medical Centre, Marathahalli.

She added cold weather constises blood vessels to constrict, raising blood pressure, while heat leads to dilation, sudden drops and dizziness. Along with staying hydrated, doctors advise wearing removable layers to cope with changing temperatures. "I would advise layering for those commuting in the early hours or late hours of the day and removing layers as the temperature changes," Dr Leeni said.

File photo for representation

UNPREDICTABLE NATURE: Doctors report surge in respiratory illnesses, including bronchitis, viral flu, persistent cough, sore throat and fever, as residents struggle to adapt to daily temperature fluctuations

WARNING SIGNS

- Persistent cold, cough
- Fever
- Fatigue, weakness
- Dizziness or fainting spells
- Worsening breathlessness/wheezing

MEASURES TO STAY FIT

- Drink plenty of fluids, avoid exposure to heat in afternoon
- Wear layers in cooler hours, light and breathable clothes in the afternoon
- Avoid sudden movement from air-conditioned indoor areas to hotter outdoors
- Seasonal flu vaccination & good hygiene
- Eat at least one fruit a day

METRO WRAP

Travel firm's bus catches fire

NO CASUALTIES REPORTED

A minibus attached to a private travel company, parked on the premises of a BMTC bus stop in Chandra Layout for a week, caught fire Wednesday morning. There were no passengers in the 21-seater bus belonging to Chandra Layout resident Thirunavukkarasu. Initially, there were rumours that fire set to rubbish in the bus bay spread to the vehicle. However, police denied this after checking CCTV footage. They said fire broke out in the bus engine and the flames spread.

Cocaine in fabric seized from Brazilian

Narcotics Control Bureau sleuths arrested a Brazilian man and seized 4.7kg of cocaine worth over Rs 23 crore from him at Kempegowda International Airport. The drug peddler travelled from Sao Paulo to Doha, Qatar, and subsequently boarded a flight to Bengaluru. Sleuths found four women's handbags, specially designed with false walls and concealed compartments. These contained multiple pieces of clothing fabric chemically infused with cocaine," NCB said in a note.

HC bins PIL on traffic congestion

The high court Wednesday disposed of a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking directions to the authorities to study traffic congestion in Bengaluru and take up measures urgently.

A division bench of Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice CM Poonacha said: "We do not see it appropriate to issue any judicial direction in this regard. We expect the authorities concerned to take steps as considered suitable when flagged by several authorities."

Man, 76, strangles wife, 63, says, 'none to look after her'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Haunted by morbid thoughts of who would take care of his wife upon his death, a former Isro staffer, 76, allegedly strangled his wife to death Wednesday morning, contemplated ending his life by suicide, but panicked and aborted the plan.

Police officers probing the case said Nageshwar Rao, who retired as a team leader, is under treatment for unstated psychological issues. The incident took place in a senior living community in east Bengaluru's Whitefield area, a first such case in many years.

According to preliminary investigation, Rao used a bath towel to smother Sandhya Shri, 63, while she was preparing lunch in the kitchen around 10.15am in The Virtuoso in Bommenahalli. Rao has been arrested on charges of murder.

The couple from Andhra Pradesh purchased the flat three years ago. Their only daughter is settled in the US. Informed by police, the daughter is flying to Bengaluru, sources said.

"After the woman collapsed, Rao sat near her body for 20 minutes. He called a neighbour, asking him to come home immediately as he had killed his wife. The neighbour thought it was a joke. When Rao repeatedly said it, the neighbour rushed in," police said.

Seeing Sandhya motionless on the floor, the neighbour called a doctor in the apartment. Since many senior citizens live in the apartment, an ambulance and a doctor are deployed round the clock.

"The doctor examined Sandhya and declared her dead. Then, the doctor called police," an investigating officer said.

When police entered the flat, Rao was sitting on the sofa and readily confessed to the incident. "Yes, I killed her. I may not live more than 3-4 years from now. Who'll look after her after my death? We don't have close relatives in Bengaluru," he said.

Nageshwar Rao & Sandhya Shri

The former Isro staffer readily confessed to the murder. But when police questioned him about the motive, he responded with a blank stare

Elderly man hacks wife to death on infidelity suspicion, arrested

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: A 66-year-old mason allegedly murdered his 58-year-old wife at their west Bengaluru home around Tuesday midnight, suspecting her fidelity. He later attempted to end his life, police said.

Devi, a contract sweeper at Kranthiveera Sangolli Rayanna railway station in Majestic, lived with her husband Kumar at Sanjeevininagar in Moodalapalya. Their two daughters are married and live separately, while the son stays with his wife in the same locality.

Kumar allegedly attacked Devi while she was asleep and struck her on the neck with a machete. She died on the spot.

After the assault, Kumar allegedly called his son and informed him of the killing, stating that he intended to die by suicide.

The son rushed to the house and found his father attempting to hang himself. He intervened and alerted police.

Govindarajanagar police personnel detained Kumar and shifted him for medical attention before placing him under arrest. A senior police officer said Kumar had been suspecting his wife's fidelity for the past two years. The suspicion reportedly began during a family trip to Sabarimala, where he saw her speaking to the driver hired for the journey and suspected an affair.

Transport stir today despite govt promise

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: A day before the proposed 'Bengaluru Chalo' protest by employees of four state-run road transport corporations (RTCs), the govt Wednesday evening said it will release salary arrears for 36 months and revise their pay with effect from April 1, 2026.

SALARY ARREARS

The decision, taken at a high-level meeting chaired by chief minister Siddaramaiah and attended by transport minister Ramalinga Reddy and senior officials, is expected to cost the state exchequer nearly Rs 1239.5 crore to pay the arrears for 36 months. Ramalinga Reddy said the govt will meet trade union representatives on pay revision.

Trade unions of the four RTCs have been demanding clearance of arrears for 38 months — from Jan 1, 2020 to Feb 28, 2023 — without any cuts. However, the govt had earlier maintained that, based on recommendations of MR Sreenivas Murthy report, arrears were applicable only for 14 months.

Despite the announcement, office-bearers of the unions' joint action committee said the 'Bengaluru Chalo' protest will go ahead at Freedom Park Thursday. They reiterated that arrears for 38 months must be paid in full without deductions.

60m rose stems shipped from KIA

Bengaluru: Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) shipped around 60 million rose stems during Valentine's season this year. The total consignment weighed more than 2,390 tonnes and was transported across 36 international and 43 domestic destinations. The top international destinations were Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, and domestic ones were Delhi and Kolkata. TNN

3 kidnap spa owner to pay gambling debt, arrested

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: A daring kidnapping plot that unfolded on the outskirts of the city ended with the dramatic rescue of a spa owner and the arrest of three young men who allegedly abducted him for ransom after meticulously tracking his movements for days.

Electronics City police arrested Manjunath, 25, from Bannerghatta; Prajwal, 25, from Anekal; Akshay, 23, of Jigani, and rescued the victim, Ashutosh Jha alias Ashit Jha, a native of Bihar who lived in Thirupalya near Bommasandra and co-owned a spa in Akshayanagar, Begur.

The incident took place around 9pm on Feb 15. Ashit and spa manager Manu Kumar were heading home on a bike after closing the spa when a car intercepted them near Arena Sports Road, close to Bettadasanapura.

The sudden obstruction caused Manu to lose control and both fell. One of the assailants allegedly got off the car, attacked Manu with a long machete and forcibly pushed Ashit into the vehicle at knipoint before fleeing.

Manu, unsure whether the gang intended to abduct both of them, rushed to a nearby hospital in an auto rickshaw for treatment. Soon after, the kidnappers used Ashit's phone to call him. They made Ashit speak briefly to assure him he was safe, warning him not to alert police and demanding a ransom. Later, they contacted Ashit's partner, Prakash Mandal, seeking Rs 2 lakh for his release.

Manu lodged a complaint with Electronics City police around 1.45am. A special team led by inspector Naveen GM began tracking the suspects, who repeatedly made calls from Ashit's phone and kept changing locations, switching the device off between calls to avoid detection.

Police told Mandal to agree to pay the ransom. "The gang chose a deserted place in S Bingipura to collect the ransom. One of the miscreants came to collect the money, and police detained him. Based on his inputs, the other two accused were detained, and Ashit was rescued Tuesday evening," said DCP (Electronics City) M Narayana.

Police seized the car used in the abduction, lethal weapons, three mobile phones and Rs 9,700 in cash from the trio.

Investigations revealed that Manjunath, a housekeeping supervisor at an apartment in Gottigere, had allegedly misappropriated Rs 1.5 lakh from the apartment funds and lost it in online gaming. During his birthday on Feb 5, he confided his financial troubles to Akshay and Prajwal. Akshay, who needed money to service his car and had a prior murder case against him, allegedly suggested kidnapping a spa owner he knew. Fearing exposure, they dropped that plan and instead targeted Ashit, tracking him for three days before executing the abduction.

With no place to hide him, the trio kept roaming around the city after the kidnapping, even making Ashit pay for food and fuel during captivity.

Wednesday, the local court remanded the accused in police custody.

With no place to hide the victim, the trio kept roaming around the city after the kidnap, making him pay for food and fuel during captivity

VTU to students: Geo-tag pics, videos to earn activity points

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Bengaluru: Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU) has made it mandatory to geo-tag photos and videos for AICTE activities students are required to complete.

As per AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education), engineering students must earn 100 activity points, which will be reflected in their eight-semester grade card. The activities can be spread over the years at the students' convenience. They include helping local schools enhance enrolment or achieve good results, automation of local activities, assisting in the marketing of rural produce, skilling the rural population and tourism promotion.

VTU said the activity points tracking system (APTS) app will be launched for monitoring, verification and compliance of AICTE activity points. Students have been asked to upload only geo-tagged photographs and location details for every activity undertaken through the VTU app.

"Some students sit at home and upload fake certificates. To put an end to such malpractice, VTU has now instructed that only geo-tagged photos must be uploaded. This will prevent students from cheating. If students are caught committing such mistakes, their final mark sheets will be withheld as a warning," said S Vidyashankar, Vice-Chancellor, VTU.

Geo-tagging photos in assignments is now a common practice in higher educational institutions.

Student grievance portal launched

VTU has started a new student grievance portal, e-Vidhyarthi Mitra, where students can submit their grievances. It is a step forward in providing services to students by directly connecting them with the vice-chancellor, the university said.

"Students can register and lodge a complaint on the portal. Upon lodging a complaint, a unique grievance ID will be assigned, using which the grievance will be assessed by the VC and his team," the university said. TNN

Birthday boy dies as truck hits bike

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: A private company employee celebrating his 24th birthday with friends Tuesday died after his motorbike collided with a truck at Seladevanahalli, Chikkatanavarain the city.

M Pavan Kumar celebrated his special day near Nelamangala and was riding back home when the accident took place at 5.45pm. "Pavan sustained serious injuries on his head and nose. The truck driver fled the scene, leaving behind the vehicle," a police officer said. Cops didn't find a helmet near the accident spot. Pavan's blood samples have been sent to the laboratory to check whether he was under the influence of alcohol, the police officer said.

ALMANAC (19-2-2026)

Kumbha Masa 7 – Shri Vishwavasu Nama Samvatsara – Uttarayana – Shishira Ritu – Tithi: Phalguna Sukla Dwitiya h. 15-59 Nakshatra: Purva Bhadrapada h. 20-52 Yoga: Sukkha h. 20-03.
Rahu Kalam 1.30-3pm.
Kali Day 3872625
— KL Vidya Shankara Sonayaji

SP Road traders seek urgent relocation of transformer after repeated blasts

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Bengaluru: Thousands of bargain-hunting customers pour into the cramped lanes of SP Road every day, crossing rows of shops stacked with mobile accessories and computer hardware. But amid the usual din of haggling and honking, a far more unsettling sound often cuts through the crowd: The crackle and boom of a malfunctioning electric transformer that traders say has long threatened both their life and livelihood.

Looming above the packed bylanes near KR Market, just beside Raja Rajeshwari Temple on PR Lane, stands the massive transformer, which for year has emitted sparks, blasts and even caught fire. Repeated complaints have brought little to no relief, traders claimed.

They fear one serious malfunction could trigger chaos in the densely crowded hub. Alarmed by the recurring incidents, Bangalore Electronic Dealers' Association (BEDA) wrote to Bescom recently, urging immediate relocation of what they described as a "high-risk" transformer. Photographs shared by traders show flames shooting out during a previous incident.

Arun Jain, secretary of BEDA, said: "This is a very old and huge transformer. Sometimes it emits blasts so loudly that people run away in fear. Before a bigger tragedy happens, we are requesting Bescom to shift it permanently to a safer location."

According to traders, fencing installed around the transformer after complaints narrowed the already congested lane, blocking two shop shutters as well as restricting access.

Dilip Moll, who runs a mobile accessories shop nearby, said, "I am here since 2017 and the transformer problem existed from that time. Earlier, I had five to six staff members. Now only two are there; the boys left because of the fear. I am also planning to vacate because I cannot risk my life every day. I have more than Rs 1 lakh worth of stock — what if a major fire breaks out and destroys everything?"

Traders claim at least one shop adjacent to the transformer vacated nearly eight months ago. They also pointed to a street food vendor who operates next to the transformer, frying snacks in the open, further heightening fire risk concerns.

The association proposed alternate locations, including a nearby GBA ground and space along a hospital compound wall, stating adequate space is available but requires inter-departmental coordination. "We even met the Bescom managing director personally and handed over a letter. If required, traders are willing to financially support the relocation. But departments need to take responsibility. It is not our job to obtain govt permissions," Jain added.

Despite multiple representations over the past few months, traders allege no concrete action has been taken. When **TOI** contacted Bescom engineers, they were unavailable for comments.

SCARY SPARKLES

SHORT TAKES

BUILDING CADRES: Nikhil Kumaraswamy and Sill Mahesh of JD(S) at the party's 'Janaradhige Janata Dal' campaign in Mysuru, Wednesday

Height of corruption, says BJP on CA sites decision

Union minister Pralhad Joshi criticised the govt for allotting 24 civic amenity (CA) sites for Congress party offices, asking whether the land was Congress' "ancestral property". Joshi called it the "height of corruption". He said the land, worth crores of rupees, should have been used for public parks, libraries and hospitals instead of being earmarked for Congress Bhavans. He called it a "betrayal of the public". Joshi accused Congress of treating public assets as its own property and prioritising party interests over public welfare. BJP state president BY Vijayendra also criticised the decision, alleging the Congress administration was indulging in "self-serving decisions" instead of fulfilling its responsibility to provide land and housing to the poor.

Govt restricts electronic media access at Soudha

The govt has barred electronic media personnel from following the chief minister, his deputy, ministers, legislators and bureaucrats within Vidhana Soudha, restricting them to a single designated gate at the secretariat. The order, issued last month, permits microphones only outside the main gate. The decision drew criticism from media organisations and opposition parties, which accused the govt of attempting to curb media scrutiny. It said it was retaliation for exposing alleged corruption. But sources in the CMO said the order is likely to be rescinded soon. They said the directive was issued by "overzealous" officials and that the intent was only to regulate the growing number of media personnel inside Vidhana Soudha and not to prevent journalists from seeking responses from legislators.

Karnataka & France discuss defence, AI partnership

Priyank Kharge, minister for IT-BT, met Anne Le Hénaff, France's minister delegate for artificial intelligence and digital affairs, and discussed ways to expand structured long term partnerships in AI, aerospace, startups and digital governance. France highlighted its need for skilled technology professionals and interest in joint talent development. Priyank proposed innovation, skills and manufacturing corridors and support platforms for French startups in Karnataka. Le Hénaff said France's AI strategy focuses on sustainability, public interest and child protection.

Contractors threaten strike; blackmail won't work: DKS

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Deputy chief minister DK Shivakumar, who holds the Bengaluru development portfolio, Wednesday lambasted Karnataka State Contractors Association's decision to strike work, challenging them to follow through on their threat and asserting "blackmail tactics" would not work with his govt.

Earlier, this week, the contractors' association said they would go ahead with a protest at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on March 2 since the govt failed to respond within a deadline set by the association to release Rs 32,000 crore in pending dues.

"Let them stop work on all projects and we will see," Shivakumar said. "If they want to blackmail us, let them, but the govt will release funds only when available."

BELLIGERENT MOOD: DK Shivakumar at a review meeting of state Congress social media wing, on Wednesday; (Inset) R Manjunath

'Previous govt's mess'

He accused contractors of going ahead and launching projects awarded by the previous BJP govt without ensuring availability of funds. "Despite knowing there was no money, who asked them to start work?" Shivakumar said. "The previous BJP govt created this problem. It had budget allocations for Rs 10,000 crore but issued work orders worth Rs 30,000 crore and Rs 40,000 crore."

He said he has released pending funds from his own department (Bengaluru development) to the extent possible. "We are also compassionate. We will release funds as per the budget. Let us wait for the budget to be over and then we will sit and discuss this issue," he said.

Contractors' association president R Manjunath, who announced the deadline last month, said they were hoping the govt would meet them and address their grievances. "But the govt does not seem to be in any mood," he alleged. "Contractors have taken loans and mortgaged properties and jewellery to complete projects, but the govt has not responded to our problems."

Manjunath said bills dating back to 2022-23 remain unpaid despite repeated appeals to the CM, cabinet ministers, and officials.

Double standards

Meanwhile, R Ashoka, leader of the opposition in the legislative assembly, accused the govt of adopting "double standards" over allegations of bribery. He said the contractors' association's allegation of 10% commission was serious and challenged Congress leaders to file defamation cases if the charges were false. He said ministers should clarify the allegations instead of dismissing them.

Ashoka also alleged state tenders were being awarded to contractors from Andhra Pradesh and demanded that works under the Kalyana Karnataka Region Development Board be allotted to local contractors.

He claimed a 21% commission was being charged on garbage-related contracts and accused a "mafia" of causing the garbage crisis.

Guarantees effect? Steep drop in farmer suicides

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mysuru: Karnataka reported 434 farmer suicides in the first nine months of the financial year 2025-26 (up to Dec 31, 2025), marking a sharp decline compared to the previous two financial years. Farmer organisations said deaths by suicides have dropped across the state.

Agriculture minister N Cheluvarayaswamy, in reply to a question from Hunnunastappa R Nirani during a recent legislative council session, revealed the state recorded 2,846 farmer suicides over the past two years and nine months. In 2023-24, Karnataka reported 1,354 farmer suicides, a figure that dropped marginally to 1,178 in 2024-25.

Rudrappalpura Nagendra, president, Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, confirmed the decline in deaths by suicides and attributed it to increased awareness and the govt's guarantee schemes, especially Gruha Lakshmi, which he said could have eased financial pressure on small and marginal farmers.

"Farmer families are the biggest beneficiaries of the Gruha Lakshmi scheme; Rs 24,000 per year is some relief for poor farmers," he said.

Of the 434 cases reported this financial year, compensation applications were rejected in 35 cases as authorities found that farm distress or crop loan issues were not the primary reasons for the suicides.

BETTER PROSPECTS: State Raitha Sangha attributed the decline to increased awareness on suicides and the Gruha Lakshmi scheme

District-wise data showed Mysuru recorded the highest number of cases this year, with 41 suicides. Of these, 10 compensation claims were rejected. Kalaburagi reported 40 cases, with four applications not considered for compensation. Belagavi stood third with 36 reported suicides, and two applications were rejected.

PAYOUT: Karnataka Silk Industries Corporation Ltd officials, Wednesday in Bengaluru, presented chief minister Siddaramaiah with a cheque for Rs 3 crore as dividend and another for Rs 2 crore as contribution to the CM's relief fund

BJP state executive to praise Centre for G RAM G Act

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Union minister Bhupendra Yadav will inaugurate BJP's special state executive meeting at Palace Grounds in Bengaluru Thursday, a conference where brass is expected to outline the party's political and organisational roadmap in Karnataka. **BL Santhosh**, the party's national organising general secretary, will also participate.

BJP state general secretary P Rajeev said members would adopt four resolutions — two praising the Union govt and two criticising the state govt. "The first resolution will welcome the Union budget, describing it as visionary, development-oriented, and one that has tremendous potential to realise the dream of Viksit Bharat by 2047," Rajeev said.

The second will commend the Centre for transforming MGNREGA into G RAM G, aimed at removing loopholes and making the programme more accountable, transparent and effective, Rajeev said.

The third resolution will criticise the state Congress govt over Bengaluru's infrastructure, alleging that residents are facing hardships due to what the party calls "policy and governance failures". "The Congress govt headed by chief minister Siddaramaiah has made day-to-day life of the common man in Bengaluru miserable. This will be the thrust of the resolution," Rajeev said.

The fourth resolution will focus on the overall performance of the govt in Karnataka over the past two years and nine months, with emphasis on what BJP describes as "the absence of effective governance and failures on the law and order front". The resolution is also expected to flag what the party alleges is a "growing tendency among Congress workers to take the law into their own hands".

Sources say the executive meeting will also discuss strategies to strengthen BJP organisation, expand its cadre base and prepare for political challenges. Deliberations are expected on organisational restructuring, booth-level mobilisation and coordination among party units.

Forum labels SIR 'electoral genocide'

A federation of some 180 civil society organisations under 'My Vote, My Right' demanded that the state govt pass a resolution against the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls during the budget session, citing implementation lapses affecting migrants, women, transgender persons and booth-level officers. The forum urged chief electoral officer V Anbukumar to suspend the rollout until the Supreme Court passes a verdict on pending cases. Dalit Sangharsha Samiti-Ambedkaravada state convenor Mavali Shankar called the exercise "electoral genocide" and demanded Congress reveal its stand. Women's rights activist Mamatha Yajaman said the exercise places undue burden on married women since they must trace old records, while Nisha Gulur warned: "It is inevitable that our community (trans) will be excluded from voter rolls."

Legislators say trip to Oz-NZ personal

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Congress legislators who left Wednesday on a tour to Australia and New Zealand said they had neither informed chief minister Siddaramaiah nor sought permission from deputy CM and KPCC president DK Shivakumar since the trip was personal.

Of the 22 legislators who embarked on the trip, two are MLCs. They departed from KIA for Australia via Kuala Lumpur, from where they are scheduled to travel to New Zealand before returning to Bengaluru on March 3.

HD Thammaiah, Chikmagalur MLA, said the trip was planned during the winter session and colleagues joined voluntarily. "It is normal for people to go on an overseas trip every year; we are no exception," he said. "It has become news only because of political speculation. We are bearing all expenses for the trip; I transferred money to the tours and travels company from my bank account. You can look it up."

C Puttaranganshetty, who represents Chamarajanagar, also dismissed speculation, saying no permission was necessary for a private trip. "We did not inform the CM, and we felt there was no need for Shivakumar's permission either. After all, we are not being sponsored by any govt department," he said.

Clarity CM issue quickly: MLA

Mandya MLA Ganiga Ravikumar criticised Congress' high command over continuing uncertainty on a change of CM and urged party brass to state unequivocally whether DK Shivakumar would get the job, warning that prolonged ambiguity could harm both party and govt. He ridiculed fellow legislators considered close to CM Siddaramaiah for going on an overseas trip, saying a govt can't be changed merely by such tours. "Even if I take 30 MLAs abroad or remain in Mandya, the CM cannot be replaced. Such decisions are taken only after discussions between the high command, Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar," he said.

HC: Lingayat and Ganiga not mutually exclusive identities

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ganiga may subsist as a distinct caste group within the broader Lingayat fold, the high court observed

Bengaluru: A person described as "Lingayat" in ancestral records may, upon proof, establish Ganiga identity within that fold, the high court has observed.

"Lingayat" and "Ganiga" are not mutually exclusive identities. Ganiga may subsist as a distinct caste group within the broader Lingayat fold, Justice Suraj Govindaraj said in his recent order.

Police constable TN Jagadeesh, working in Mysuru and aspiring for a sub-inspector post, contended that one Rajkumar Y Bilagi from Bagalkot falsely claimed that he belonged to Lingayat Ganiga community, which is classified under category 2A, and got selected as a PSI. Jagadeesh belongs to Vishwakarma community, which is also classified under category 2A of OBC. According to him, the commissioner of the backward classes welfare department should not have relied on the school records of Rajkumar wherein the word Ganiga was inserted, thereby making it appear as Hindu Ganiga Lingayat.

The school records of the father, brother, sister and other close relatives of Rajkumar uniformly reflected their caste as "Hindu Lingayat", he added. However, Justice Govindaraj pointed out that the deputy commissioner considered the school records of Rajkumar and the transfer certificate wherein it was mentioned as Ganiga, and the caste certificates issued to family members corroborated the same.

The cumulative documentary evidence satisfactorily established that Rajakumar belongs to the Ganiga community under category 2A, the judge added while dismissing the petition. The dismissal of the writ petition shall not be construed as foreclosing any action that may be permissible in law if credible material demonstrating fraud, fabrication, or misrepresentation surfaces in future proceedings before a competent forum.

It is clarified that the judgment does not lay down any proposition that a mere assertion of sub-caste identity within the Lingayat fold is sufficient to claim reservation.

38 women, 2 transgender candidates among 83 new civil judges

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Koppal: The high court Tuesday notified the final selection of 83 candidates for appointment as civil judges following the competitive written examination held in Dec 2025 and the viva-voce conducted in Jan 2026.

The selection was made in accordance with the Karnataka Judicial Services (Recruitment) Rules, 2004, and subsequent amendments. The final list was prepared on the basis of merit in the written examination and interview.

Twenty-five candidates were from the SC category, while 10 from ST category

Of the 83 candidates, 35 were selected under the general merit category, including sub-quotas such as women, rural, Kannada medium, ex-servicemen, persons with disabilities and transgender people. Twenty-five candidates were from the scheduled caste category and 10 from scheduled tribe category. The remaining 13 belonged to other backward classes.

Women secured a significant share, with 38 candidates selected — nearly half of the total appointments. Forty-three candidates were men. Two candidates were chosen under transgender quota.

Among the select candidates, two individuals — Santosh Belgund and Savita Vandal from Gangavathi in Koppal district — were appointed civil judges. Both are 26 years old and cleared the exam on their first attempt.

Friend uses auto driver's account for cybercrime

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Bengaluru: A 23-year-old autorickshaw driver accused his friend of misusing his bank account for cyberfraud transactions and forcing him to get a second account opened in another friend's name.

The accused is Najeem, according to the complaint filed by Sheikh Pardeen Ahmed from RG Halli.

A month ago, Najeem offered Ahmed help to open a bank account. Najeem gave him Rs 2,000, a mobile phone number and an email ID, and took him to a bank in Banaswadi. Najeem waited outside the bank while Ahmed opened the account using his Aadhaar and other credentials provided by Najeem. Later, Najeem collected the passbook, cheque book and debit card. He told Ahmed that money would be transferred to the account and he would be paid a commission each time he withdrew cash and handed it over to Najeem. Najeem also persuaded Ahmed to get another account opened in the name of his friend, Shahid, and promised commission. Recently, Ahmed came to know that the accounts had been used for cybercrime transactions and he moved police.

Man tries for escort service, loses ₹64k

A 26-year-old man lost over Rs 64,000 to fraudsters after trying to book escort services online.

According to a complaint filed by private firm employee Akash (name changed), a woman identifying herself as Ananya Reddy contacted him on Telegram and offered him services. After exchanging messages and details about each other, they discussed the cost. On the pretext of collecting service and security charges, Ananya convinced him to pay Rs 64,500 in multiple transactions through a digital payment application.

When she continued to demand more money, Akash suspected something amiss, cancelled the booking and demanded a refund. But Ananya had gone incommunicado by then. TNN

SOPs for govt colleges to check fake certificates

Bengaluru: In a bid to curb submission of fake academic and reservation certificates by guest faculty members, the department of collegiate education issued standard operating procedure to govt first-grade colleges across Karnataka.

The move comes in the wake of allegations that several guest lecturers submitted fake postgraduate (PG), MPhil, PhD, National Eligibility Test (NET), Karnataka State Eligibility Test (K-SET) and Kalyana Karnataka reservation certificates to secure appointments. Under the new SOP, every govt college has been directed to constitute a 'certificate verification committee' to thoroughly examine authenticity of documents submitted by guest faculty members.

As per the guidelines, college principals must ensure postgraduate degrees are issued by varsities recognised by University Grants Commission (UGC). In cases where certificates are found to be fake, the documents must be uploaded on Education Management Information System (EMIS) portal, and the faculty member concerned must be terminated immediately. TNN

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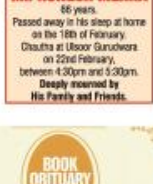
OBITUARY
SAD DEMISE

With profound grief and sorrow, we announce the sudden demise of
Capt. Arvind Sharma
who left for his heavenly abode on 18th February 2026.
Last rituals will be held at 4:00 PM on 19th Feb 2026 at Wilson Garden Crematorium.
Deeply Mourned by: Sapna Sharma & Agni Sharma


Mr. RONESH MEHRA
66 years.
Passed away in his sleep at home on the 18th of February. Chautha at Ulsoor Gurudwara on 22nd February, between 4:30pm and 5:30pm.
Deeply mourned by His Family and Friends.

Fondly Remembered
SMT. INDIRA SHAH
03 September, 1944 - 19 February, 2025
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BEREAVED SHAH PARIVAR

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THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2026

BHAGWAT: BRITISH DISTORTED EDUCATION SYSTEM, IT MUST BE FIXED TO MAKE INDIA 'VISHWAGURU'

BSP WILL CONTEST POLLS ALONE, RIVALS SPREADING TIE-UP RUMOURS TO HURT PARTY'S PROSPECTS: MAYA

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To have **richa.gandhi@timesofindia.com**

NDA RS tally set to cross 130 as 37 seats go to polls in March

Fate Of Retiring Members Pawar, Singhvi, Athawale Uncertain

Vishwa Mohan
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Governing NDA is set to further strengthen its tally in the Upper House after biennial polls for 37 seats in Rajya Sabha on March 16, but the fate of prominent retiring members such as Sharad Pawar (NCP-SP), Abhishek Manu Singhvi (Congress), Ramdas Athawale (RPI-A), Tiruchi Siva (DMK) and Priyanka Chaturvedi (Sena UBT) will depend on how their respective parties coordinate with their alliance partners.

BJP-led NDA's tally is expected to cross 130 with the advantage of at least four additional members in Rajya Sabha, whose current strength is 243 with one vacancy each in Jharkhand and West Bengal.

The states where seats will be vacant in April are Maharashtra (7 seats), Tamil Nadu (6), West Bengal (5), Bihar (5), Odisha (4), Assam (3), Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Haryana (2 each), and Himachal Pradesh (1).

NDA has govts in six — Maharashtra, Odisha, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Assam — of the 10 states where seats will be vacant due to members retiring, giving it a clear advantage. The opposition alliance has govts in Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and West Bengal.

In Maharashtra, since the governing coalition, Mahayuti, is expected to secure six seats as against one by opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi, it's advantage NDA in the state.

On the other hand, MVA will see a lot of political maneuvering as the alliance will have to choose between the candidates of Sena UBT and NCP(SP). In case NCP(SP) sticks with Pawar, it is to be seen whether NCP extends his support to him amid talks of a merger of the factions. Despite not having the numbers, NCP(SP) working president Supriya Sule didn't rule out the possibility of nominating her father, claiming that a MVA meeting would be held soon to finalise a name.

WHAT NEXT? Sharad Pawar, Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Ramdas Athawale, Priyanka Chaturvedi

The seven Rajya Sabha members from Maharashtra whose terms are set to expire on April 2 are Pawar, Fauzia Khan (NCP-SP), Bhagwat Kisharao Karad (BJP), Dhairyasheel Patil (BJP), Athawale, Chaturvedi and Rajani Patil (Congress).

In Bihar, polls will be held for five seats, three of which are held by governing NDA, including two by JD(U).

RJD, the principal opposition party in the state, has only 25 MLAs, leaving the combined strength of the alliance (Congress and the Left) at 35 — five less than the number it would require to retain an RS berth. In this scenario, it would be extremely difficult for RJD to repeat MP and former Union minister Prem Chand Gupta in the Upper House.

In West Bengal, the governing Trinamool Congress is expected to win four of the five RS seats while the opposition BJP may secure one.

Sambhal's Kidwai clan tries to cap wedding excess with ban on DJs, dowry display

Times News Network

Meerut: A community council of the Kidwai clan from the Muslim community in Sambhal has imposed six binding rules on its roughly 25,000 members, barring DJs and bhangra at weddings, prohibiting the exchange of mobile numbers between prospective brides and grooms before marriage, and fixing a narrow one-hour window for wedding processions, with fines for delays. Enforcement will rest with the clan's head, who can impose penalties ranging from fines to social boycott for violations.

The decisions were taken on Tuesday during a panchayat in the Saif Ka Sarai area, where community elders and representatives gathered to discuss what they described as rising extravagance and social strain linked to weddings. Among the most stringent measures is a restriction allowing only one wedding feast, intended to prevent what organisers called unnecessary expenditure and food wastage. The bride's family has also been barred from demanding a mobile phone, and the giving, taking or public display of dowry has been strictly prohibited.

The council set the timing of the wedding procession between 3pm and 4pm. If the groom's side arrives late, the family will be fined Rs 5,000 per hour. In addition, all pre-wedding rituals that begin days before the ceremony have been asked to stop, consolidating celebrations into a shorter, more regulated format.

Community leader Mohammad Nadeem said the measures were designed to curb showmanship and the dowry system while encouraging simpler ceremonies for and financial stability. He framed the rules as corrective rather than punitive, arguing that the pressure to match the spending of others had led families to stretch their means.

On Feb 14, the usually calm village of Jhamka pulsed with music, colour and celebration as a grand wedding unfolded. As dhols and the DJ belted out music, members of the groom's family and his friends began showering currency notes on the bride. Speculation spread like wildfire as the video swirled around social media. Some claimed the family showered Rs 8.5 crore.

As the rumours spiralled, Nishan Singh, owner of Majha Block DJ, went live on social media and explained that the total amount was around Rs 3 lakh, mostly in smaller denominations such as Rs 10 notes — which made the pile appear far larger on camera.

Bride gets ₹3L note-shower at her wedding

Yudhvir Rana

Tarn Taran: A wedding in a Tarn Taran village, Punjab, turned into a spectacle of flying currency when video showed the ground covered in money showered on the bride — sparking wild rumours of crores being splurged before the truth finally came to light.

Money fluttered through air, spinning under decorative lights before settling on the ground

Rohit, Supriya step up pressure on govt for transparent probe into Ajit crash

Times News Network

Mumbai/Pune: NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar on Wednesday demanded that civil aviation minister K Rammohan Naidu step down from his post until the probe into the Baramati air crash that killed **Ajit Pawar** was completed. Baramati MP and Ajit's cousin Supriya Sule also called for a "transparent" inquiry into the crash that left five persons dead.

Rohit, who is Ajit's nephew, alleged that VSR Ventures, the charter company that operated the Learjet aircraft involved in the Jan 28 crash, was being protected. Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau is expected to release a preliminary report by Feb 27.

Rohit alleged that the civil aviation minister and his party, TDP, were close to the company owners. "Some former ministers from Maharashtra and top TDP ministers from Andhra Pradesh attended the wedding of Rohit Singh, son of VSR owner VK Singh," he said, adding that Naidu should not continue as civil aviation minister on moral grounds. He welcomed the move by NCP politicians, including deputy CM Sunetra Pawar, to seek a CBI probe into the crash.

Rohit also said his family had expressed concerns about his safety as he had taken on the "high and mighty". He added that if there was a political angle to the accident, it could involve speculation that NCP(SP) may merge with NCP and join NDA, or Ajit could quit NDA. "Some groups were unhappy with either scenario," Rohit said.

Saying new information was "coming to light" about the crash every day, Sule said, "Everyone is now raising questions. Therefore, we are seeking comprehensive data and a formal inquiry." Sule said Rohit was doing a "scientific follow-up" of the matter. "He lost his uncle and wants to know the truth," she said.

Arrested SDM suspended over assault death

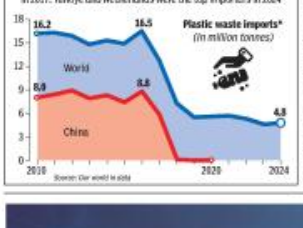
Raipur: Amid mounting protests, the Chhattisgarh govt Wednesday suspended the arrested sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) of Kusmi in Balrampur district who is alleged to have led the assault on three villagers on Sunday, leaving one of them dead.

Following the incident, the SDM, Karun Dahariya, was arrested on Monday and later remanded to jail. Locals have been staging protests over the death of the villager, a tribal, who was allegedly beaten to death over suspicions of illegal bauxite mining. Dahariya's suspension order says he will remain attached to the Surguja divisional commissioner's office in Ambikapur during the suspension period. TNN

STATISTICS — A slice of life in numbers

Why waste plastic imports have a China-sized hole

Movement of waste plastic across borders halved in 2018 when China put a ban on its import. It is now down to a third of what it was in 2017. Turkiye and Netherlands were the top importers in 2024



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After months, B'desh-born teen gets bail amid CAA plea

Nationality Still Under Legal Scrutiny

Pinak Priya Bhattacharya | TNN

Jalpaiguri: She crossed the border as a child. Jail followed after 18 years in India. She walked out of prison after seeking relief under CAA, but the question of where 19-year-old Bangladesh-born Jabarani Sarkar belongs is still before the law.

The teenager accused of being an illegal Bangladeshi immigrant was released on bail after Calcutta high court said further custody was unnecessary once police wrapped up their probe and confirmed she had applied for Indian nationality under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

Jabarani was arrested on Aug 24 last year in north Bengal's Cooch Behar district. She walked free Tuesday night after her bail bonds were arranged.

Jabarani's husband was accused of harbouring an illegal immigrant

Born in Lalmonirhat, a district in Rangpur division of northern Bangladesh, Jabarani was brought to India by her father in 2007 when she was six months old and left with an uncle in Dhupguri, roughly 35km north of Kolkata. "My father felt Hindus, especially girls and women, were not safe in Bangladesh, so he left me at my uncle's home," she said.

After turning 18 in 2025, she married Debashis Sarkar, a resident of Sitalkuchi in Mathabhanga subdivision of Cooch Behar. Days later, police arrested the couple. Jabarani was charged under the Foreigners Act. Her husband was accused of harbouring an illegal immigrant. He secured bail a month later.

From jail, a new route opened. Debashis applied for her Indian citizenship under CAA and moved the high court's circuit bench in Jalpaiguri for bail. Police told the court the charge sheet had been filed. Granting relief Friday, Justice Saurav Ghosh said the marriage and the pending application under section 6B of the Citizenship Act weighed in Jabarani's favour. With interrogation in custody over, detention was not required, the court said.

The bail came with conditions. Jabarani must post a bond of Rs 10,000 with two sureties — one local — to the satisfaction of the additional chief judicial magistrate in Mathabhanga, remain within the local court's jurisdiction, and attend all hearings. Arranging the sureties took days. "It feels very good to see her in my house after so many days. CAA made that possible for us," Debashis said.

Her lawyer Subhankar Dutta said the next move would be to seek quashing of the case. CAA allows those who entered India before Dec 31, 2014, to stay while their citizenship claims are processed, even without valid travel documents, he said.

Money gaming app's ₹470 cr attached in US, Singapore

Times News Network

New Delhi: The ED on Wednesday said it has attached $56 million (around Rs 470 crore) of deposits in foreign bank accounts in the USA and Singapore, held in the names of alleged overseas shell companies of money gaming app Winzo Pvt Ltd, operated and controlled by Pawan Nanda and Saumya Singh Rathore.

The total attachment in this case, allegedly involving laundering of more than Rs 3,600 crore by promoters, is now around Rs 1,200 crore. The shell companies identified by the agency are Winzo US Inc, USA, and Winzo SG Pte Ltd, Singapore, both controlled by Nanda and Saumya Rathore.

"Probe revealed that the company was engaged in criminal activities and unscrupulous practices i.e. customers were made to play with BOTs/AI/algorithms/software (termed as PSP/KP/Persona) without being made aware of this fact. In real money games, Winzo has also prevented/limited withdrawals of monies held by the customers in the Winzo wallets," ED has said.

It further said that Winzo Pvt Ltd generated proceeds of crime in the form of 'Rake Commission' from the matches played by the BOTs with the real players on their Winzo App.

Shah skips SIR talk in Matua outreach at Mayapur event

Ashis Poddar & Rohit Khanna | TNN

Mayapur/Kolkata: Politics surrounding SIR took a back seat to spiritual reflection as home minister Amit Shah travelled Wednesday to Mayapur in Bengal's Nadia, the cradle of Bhakti movement, for a pre-poll Matua outreach focused on highlighting the community's contribution towards what he called "unification of Hindu society".

Shah lavished praise on social reformers like Matua Mahasangha founder Harichand Thakur and his son Guruchand Thakur and the Vaishnava saint Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, whom he described as the bridge between the Bhakti movement and "modernity". "Harichand and Guruchand Thakur, and Matua society and its followers, the idea of social welfare forward," he said, highlighting their campaign against untouchability and promotion of education and gender equality in the community.

Shah, a guest at the 152nd birth anniversary of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, said he was in Mayapur not as the home minister but as a devotee of the founder of 64 Gaudiya maths (monasteries) in India and abroad.

Conveying PM Modi's "Hare Krishna" greeting to those attending the event, Shah said, "Whenever foreign guests visit Modiji, he presents them a copy of the Bhagavad Gita. The epicentre of Bhakti movement was in Nadia and will spread in the days to come. I am sure we will be able to send the message of Vikait Bharat and Sanatan (dharma) to the world."

Party functionaries in West Bengal insisted that the HM didn't want politics to creep into his message of solidarity with the community.

Bengal BJP backs fish-meat ban ahead of Ram Navami

Bengal BJP president Samik Bhattacharya said Wednesday his party opposed slaughter and open sale of beef but defended Bengalis' right to eat fish and meat, seeking to settle confusion over food politics amid a veg-versus-non-veg debate before the assembly elections. Bhattacharya's remarks came after Trinamool Congress targeted an alleged "BJP fish-meat ban", linking it to a recent order by the Bihar govt regulating open sale of meat. The move triggered criticism from Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee and the TMC. Bhattacharya rejected suggestions that BJP would restrict food habits in the state. "People will eat whatever they want to eat," he said. TNN

CEO: 4,336 names removed via third-party Form-7 in UP SIR-2026

Arvind Chauhan
@timesofindia.com

Lucknow: Rejecting allegations of large-scale voter deletions across Uttar Pradesh, chief electoral officer (CEO) Navdeep Rinwa on Wednesday said only 4,336 names have been removed from the draft electoral rolls on the basis of Form-7 applications filed during the claims and objections window under the special intensive revision (SIR) 2026.

Form-7 applications are filed by third parties, i.e. applications submitted by an individual seeking deletion of another person's name.

Addressing what he termed misinformation around deletions, Rinwa presented a detailed breakdown of Form-7 inflows and outcomes.

Between Jan 6 and Feb 17, 2026, election authorities received a little over 1.35 lakh Form-7 applications. During the longer window from the SIR-2026 announcement on Oct 27, 2025, to Feb 17, 2026, total Form-7 receipts stood at 1.69 lakh, the state chief electoral office said.

Assam roll revision targets ineligible voters, says CEC

Kanghan Kalita
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Guwahati: Chief election commissioner Gyanesh Kumar defended Wednesday a special revision (SR) of Assam's electoral roll as a legal exercise to weed out ineligible voters, while signalling that the state's election schedule will be framed around Rongali Bihu after parties sought polls before the mid-April festival.

Kumar said SR was undertaken to "include all eligible electors and exclude all ineligible electors", dismissing criticism as political noise that cannot alter a statutory process.

The Election Commission wrapped up a three-day visit to Assam, with the full bench led by CEC Gyanesh Kumar and election commissioners SS Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi holding meetings with political parties and reviewing preparedness with civil and police officials.

Kumar said Assam followed SR, not special intensive revision (SIR) used in 12 other states, because of its distinct legal setting that includes the unfinished National Register of Citizens (NRC) process and rules governing "D" or doubtful voters. With NRC in its final stage, revision before elections is mandated, he said.

Booth-level officers carried out house-to-house verification before the roll was prepared, Kumar said. Voters missing from the list can apply through Form 6 and, if turned down by the electoral registration officer, appeal to the district magistrate.

Kumar said only about 500 appeals were filed statewide against a draft roll exceeding 2.5 crore voters, calling it evidence of effective work by BLOs, AEROs and AROs. On additions and deletions, he said officers "performed well".

Kashmir has more voters than Jammu division: Data

Nazeer Ganai
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Jammu: Kashmir division has more registered voters (4,688,335) than that in Jammu division (4,181,303), as per the latest district-wise enrolment data presented in J&K assembly on Wednesday.

The UT has 8,742,878 voters, comprising 4,465,361 men, 4,277,568 women, and 149 from third gender, with Srinagar topping (28) in the third category. Pulwama has 19 voters from third gender and Rajwara two. Kashmir division has 66 such voters.

Jammu has the highest number of voters (1,189,555) and Kishtwar district has the lowest at 178,402. the govt told the assembly in response to queries raised by Pulwama MLA, Waheed Parra, who also asked the govt to list steps taken to achieve 100% enrolment.

"The rise in the number of voters can largely be attributed to youth participation and first-time voters after years of boycott," Parra said.

ED attaches PACL assets worth over ₹10,000cr

Times News Network

New Delhi: In the single biggest attachment of properties, Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday said it has attached assets worth over Rs 10,000 crore of Pearl Agro Corp Ltd (PACL) in a money laundering case. These properties are located in Punjab's SAS Nagar, Rupnagar, Zirakpur and Mohali.

With this, the value of total attachments against PACL and its promoter Nirmal Singh Bhangoo and his family exceeds Rs 12,600 crore. The last biggest attachment was also against this group when the agency, in Jan this year, attached 37 properties worth over Rs 2,000 crore, including a prime plot worth over Rs 1,500 crore near Jaipur airport and others in Ludhiana.

After Pahalgam, CRPF sets up 43 temp op bases in J&K

Bharti.Jain@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: In the aftermath of Pahalgam terror attack in J&K, CRPF has set up 43 temporary operating bases across the UT, each housing 16-25 personnel who will track and eliminate terrorists holed up in the region's forbidding caches, security officials said on Wednesday.

ON ALERT: Each operating base houses 16-25 personnel

The temporary bases, 26 of which are located in the Kashmir division and 17 in the Jammu region, are at a height of 6,000 feet and above. CRPF troops, accompanied by a few J&K Police personnel, use these bases for a few days at a time to launch search and assault operations against terrorists who usually use 'dhoks' (mud and stone huts) as temporary hideouts, awaiting instructions from their Pakistan-based handlers to execute terror attacks.

CRPF has procured special equipment for these temporary bases, like tactical boots, winter jackets, sleeping bags and satellite phones.

There are about two local terrorists and around 100 foreign terrorists active at present, according to data.

The first set of such temporary bases were established by CRPF in April 2025 along the Pahalgam-Tral-Harwan axis, immediately after the April 2025 terrorist attack in Pahalgam. CRPF and other security forces had based one such base on seen in the hideout of the three Pahalgam attackers, all Pakistanis, near the Dachigam area in Srinagar. All three terrorists were eliminated in Operation Mahadev in July 2025. Prior to the terror attack, the Pakistani terrorists had taken shelter in a dhok near the tourist site in Baisaran where they would gun down 26 tourists. The terrorists escaped into the surrounding forest soon after the attack.

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COURT NOTICE
PUBLIC NOTICE BEFORE THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA
In Miscellaneous Application No 1884-1885/2025 In Special Leave Petition (Civil) No. 24821-24822/2023
Petitioner: Mummy Daddy Developers (P) Ltd.
Vs
Respondents: K.G. Pahalik Ram (Deceased) Rep by LRs and Ors.
Respondent No. 2: K.V. Bathalam Gupta S/o Venkataramaiah Shetty aged about 73 years, H.No. 10/A, 1st Cross, Devenda Narasimha Shetty Road, Shankarapuram, Bengaluru-560004 Karnataka.
PAPER PUBLICATION
That the Petitioner preferred the Miscellaneous Application in the above Special Leave Petition filed against the Final Judgment and Order 21.09.2023 passed by the Hon'ble National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission in Revision Application No. 2396 of 2023. Summons/ Notices issued by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India was not served upon the aforementioned Respondent No.2 whose presence is deemed essential for the adjudication of the Application. The Hon'ble Supreme Court as per order dated 22.01.2026 fixed the next date of hearing as 16.02.2026 at 10.30 A.M. Aforementioned Respondent No. 2 is hereby required to appear on the said date and time, either personally through a duly authorized representative, or through an advocate, to defend the Application. Failure to appear will result in the Hon'ble Court proceeding ex-parte against aforementioned Respondent No.2. On the basis of order passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, the notice published through paper publication.
Sd/-
ISHAAN GEORGE - Advocate
Supreme Court of India
A-42, First Floor, Defence Colony
New Delhi-110 024
Mob: +91-987 1557846.
Place: Bengaluru Date: 05.02.2026

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CHANGE OF NAME
I, Raghavendra Babu Bhadraiah Radhakrishna, father of Chetan Raghavendra Kusuma, residing at 42, Akshara, 2 Cro Raghavendra Layout, Marathahalli, Bangalore have changed my minor son's name from Chetan Raghavendra Kusuma to Chetan Kusuma vide affidavit dated 17.02.2026 before Notary Indira H.S.
I Maria Daisina Wife of Bhaskar BS, residing at 80,Nandadeepa Layout,KO road,Rajarajeswari Nagar,Bangalore ,have changed my name to Roshini Bhaskar Sreenivasa I shall be known as Roshini Bhaskar for all purposes.
I, Sathya Arun, Flat No 102, Block 3B, Mantri Residence, Bannerghatta Road, Kalena Agrahara, Bengaluru - 560076, have changed my name to Sathya Balasubramanian.
I, Sindhu Prasanna, R/o 34, LRDE Layout, Karthik Nagar, Marathahalli, Bangalore, have changed my name to Sindhu Kumar W/o Bhanu Kumar Radhakrishna, for all purposes.
I, Mythri R, W/o Raghavendra N, have changed my name to MYTHRI RAGHUNANDAN for all purposes.
I, Rahul Menon, R/o 34, LRDE Layout, Karthik Nagar, Marathahalli, Bangalore, have changed my name to Rahul Kumar for all purposes.
I, Tejal Das, hereby inform that my 10th Standard ICSE Marksheet and Admit Card have been lost. -Name: Tejal Das -Passing Year: 2026 -Index Number: 1320845/024 -School: Amber Valley Residential School (ICSE Board) Despite thorough search, the documents could not be found. If anyone finds them, kindly contact the undersigned. If not found, I shall proceed to apply for duplicate documents. Tejal Das Contact No: 7892000886

LOST & FOUND
I, Lakshmanna, LOST my Sslc Deed Number 5036 2011/2012 registered at Sub-Registrar Office, Pennya, Bangalore. If found, please contact S.L.Venkatesh, Phone Number 9886111188

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PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given to the public that we are investigating the right, title and interest of **Pal Ride Hotels Private Limited**, a company incorporated under the Companies Act, 2013 and having its registered office at 613-B Dhawan, 404, Sassanna Annex Road, Near South Gate Cross Bangalore, Bangalore, Karnataka, India, 560004 in the property more particularly described in the **Schedule** hereunder written ("**Property**").

ANY and all persons (including any banks or financial institutions or NBFCs or any other entities) having any right, title, claim, claim, benefit, expectant, estate, demand, and/or interest whatsoever against or in respect of the Property or any part thereof including by way of sale, transfer, exchange, device, lien, charge, mortgage, lease, licence, easement, gift, trust, bequest, inheritance, possession, tenancy, licence, sub-licence, assignment, tenancy, sub-tenancy, license, sub-license, permission, deed, easement, partition, lease, hypothecation of receivables, guarantee, maintenance, maintenance, reconciliation, rebate, or under any agreement, deed, document, bequest, succession, family arrangement / settlement / partition, or decree or order of any court of law or award passed by any authority or under any decree or decrees or order or award passed by any authority or under any decree or decrees or order or award passed by any court or tribunal or FDR or encumbrance or right to drive development potential, covenant or omission, right of pre-emption or preemption, otherwise howsoever of any nature whatsoever, in, to, out of or upon the title or ownership and / or the Property or any part thereof ("**Claims**") are hereby called upon to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documents evidence at **Bhaskaran Associates** and which is said copy thereof at the address mentioned hereinbelow within **7 (seven) days** from the date hereof, failing which, the Claim(s) / Interest(s) / Encumbrance(s) if any, of such person or persons shall be disregarded / relinquished and shall be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned for all intents and purposes and for avoiding any doubt whatsoever.

THE SCHEDULE REFERRED TO HEREINABOVE
(Description of the Property)

All that piece and parcel of land admeasuring approximately 44.00 Acres or thereabouts comprised in the land bearing Survey No. (detailed below) lying, being and situate at Village Kadaur, Tumkur Taluk, Karnataka State and within the Registration District of Kadaur, Tumkur together with all existing structures, buildings, superstructures, erections and constructions standing thereon, and all rights, title, interest, easements and appurtenances attached thereto, and bounded as follows:

Sl. No.	Survey No.	Total Area (in Acres)	Nature	Boundaries
1	50	1.20	On or towards the North – school On or towards the East – panchayath road On or towards the South – survey number 51 and 54/4 On or towards the West – road	
2	51	0.06	On or towards the North – survey number 51 On or towards the East – survey number 50 and panchayath road On or towards the South – road On or towards the West – survey number 51	
3	53	0.38	On or towards the North – school and survey number 50 On or towards the East – survey number 50 and road On or towards the South – road On or towards the West – survey number 54	
4	54/1	0.18	On or towards the North – survey number 53 On or towards the East – survey number 54/2 On or towards the South – road On or towards the West – road	
5	54/2	1.26	On or towards the North – survey number 54/1 On or towards the East – survey number 54/3 On or towards the South – road On or towards the West – road	
6	54/3	0.18	On or towards the North – survey number 54/2 On or towards the East – survey number 54/4 On or towards the South – road On or towards the West – survey number 53	
7	54/4	0.79	On or towards the North – survey number 54/3 On or towards the East – survey number 54/5 On or towards the South – road On or towards the West – school	
8	55	4.01	On or towards the North – survey number 54/4 On or towards the East – panchayath road On or towards the South – survey number 56 On or towards the West – survey number 115 and road	
9	56	2.76	On or towards the North – survey number 55 On or towards the East – panchayath road On or towards the South – survey number 57 On or towards the West – survey number 115	
10	56/1	4.08	On or towards the North – survey number 57/2 On or towards the East – survey number 118 On or towards the South – road On or towards the West – survey number 56/1 and 56/2	
11	56/2	0.38	On or towards the North – survey number 56/1 On or towards the East – panchayath road On or towards the South – survey number 56/1 On or towards the West – survey no. 59	
12	56/3	0.08	On or towards the North – survey number 56/2 On or towards the East – survey number 56/2 On or towards the South – road On or towards the West – survey number 56/2	
13	56/4	0.38	On or towards the North – survey number 56/3 On or towards the East – survey number 56/2 On or towards the South – road On or towards the West – survey number 56/2	
14	121	2.00	On or towards the North – survey number 110 On or towards the East – survey number 122 On or towards the South – road On or towards the West – survey number 122	

Total Area – 44.03

Dated this 19th day of February, 2026

For Bastion Legal
Advocates and Solicitors
Sd/-
Rashmin Mehta, Partner
(rashmin@bastionlegal.in)
Fortune Building, 1st Floor, Cincinnati Bar Road, Fort, Mumbai 400023

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given to the public that we are investigating the right, title and interest of (1) **Mr. Jagannath V Na** and (2) **Mr. Shantha J Na**, residing at 46/52, 10th A Main, 4th Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore - 560011 in the property more particularly described in the **Schedule** hereunder written ("**Property 1**") and (3) **Mrs. Shilpa Prasad Na**, having address at No.30, Nesarwadi, 2nd Cross, Ramamurthy Road, Cooke Town, Bangalore - 560005 in the property more particularly described in the **Second Schedule** hereunder written ("**Property 2**") (1) **Mr. Jagannath V Na** and (2) **Mrs. Shantha J Na** and (3) **Mrs. Shilpa Prasad Na**, are hereinafter collectively referred to as "**Landowners**", **Property 1** and **Property 2** are hereinafter collectively referred to as "**Property**".

ANY and all persons (including any banks or financial institutions or NBFCs or any other entities) having any right, title, claim, claim, benefit, expectant, estate, demand, and/or interest whatsoever against or in respect of the Property or any part thereof including by way of sale, transfer, exchange, device, lien, charge, mortgage, lease, licence, easement, gift, trust, bequest, inheritance, possession, tenancy, licence, sub-licence, assignment, tenancy, sub-tenancy, license, sub-license, permission, deed, easement, partition, lease, hypothecation of receivables, guarantee, maintenance, maintenance, reconciliation, rebate, or under any agreement, deed, document, bequest, succession, family arrangement / settlement / partition, or decree or order of any court of law or award passed by any authority or under any decree or decrees or order or award passed by any court or tribunal or FDR or encumbrance or right to drive development potential, covenant or omission, right of pre-emption or preemption, otherwise howsoever of any nature whatsoever, in, to, out of or upon the title or ownership and / or the Property or any part thereof ("**Claims**") are hereby called upon to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documents evidence at **Bhaskaran Associates** and which is said copy thereof at the address mentioned hereinbelow within **7 (seven) days** from the date hereof, failing which, the Claim(s) / Interest(s) / Encumbrance(s) if any, of such person or persons shall be disregarded / relinquished and shall be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned for all intents and purposes and for avoiding any doubt whatsoever.

THE SCHEDULE REFERRED TO HEREINABOVE
(Description of the Property 1)

FIRST SCHEDULE
(Description of the Property 1)

All that piece and parcel of land admeasuring approximately 20.34 Acres or thereabouts comprised in the land bearing Survey No. (detailed below) lying, being and situate at Village Kadur, Tumkur Taluk, Karnataka State and within the Registration District of Kadur, Tumkur together with all existing structures, buildings, superstructures, erections and constructions standing thereon, and all rights, title, interest, easements and appurtenances attached thereto, and bounded as follows:

Sl. No.	Survey No.	Total Area (in Acres)	Nature	Boundaries
1	50	0.20		On or towards the North – survey numbers 51 and 52 On or towards the South- survey number 53 On or towards the East – survey number 49 On or towards the West- survey number 74
2	51	0.21	Mr. Jagannath V Na	On or towards the North – road On or towards the South – survey number 50 On or towards the East – survey number 52 On or towards the West- survey number 50
3	52	0.21		On or towards the North – road On or towards the South – survey number 51 On or towards the East – survey number 53 On or towards the West- survey number 53
4	53	0.12	Mrs. Shantha J Na	On or towards the North – stream On or towards the South – road On or towards the East – survey number 54 On or towards the West- survey number 50, 51 and 52
5	54	0.23	Mr. Jagannath V Na	On or towards the North – stream On or towards the South – stream On or towards the East – survey number 55 On or towards the West- survey number 53
6	55	4.34	Mrs. Shantha J Na	On or towards the North – survey number 56 and 61 On or towards the East – survey number 84 On or towards the South – survey number 54 On or towards the West- survey number 61
7	56	1.31	Mr. Jagannath V Na	On or towards the North – stream On or towards the South – survey number 55 On or towards the East – survey number 61 On or towards the West- stream

Total Area – 20.34

SECOND SCHEDULE
(Description of the Property 2)

All that piece and parcel of coffee cultivated land bearing Survey No. 37 (37-1) admeasuring 4.00 Acres lying, being and situate at Village Kadur Taluk, Chikkamagaluru District, Karnataka State (formerly Karnataka State), Karnataka State and within the Registration District of Kadur together with all existing structures, buildings, superstructures, erections and constructions standing thereon, and all rights, title, interest, easements and appurtenances attached thereto, and bounded as follows:

Sl. No.	Survey No.	Total Area (in Acres)	Nature	Boundaries
1	37-1	4.00		On or towards the North – Survey No. 37 (37-1) On or towards the South – Survey No. 37 (37-1) On or towards the East – Hatchgadi Road and Survey No. 37 (37-1) On or towards the West – Survey No. 37 (37-1)

Dated this 19th day of February, 2026

For Bastion Legal
Advocates and Solicitors
Sd/-
Rashmin Mehta, Partner
(rashmin@bastionlegal.in)
Fortune Building, 1st Floor, Cincinnati Bar Road, Fort, Mumbai 400023

INS Krishna launched, cadets set to get floating classrooms

Navy Ship Can Accommodate 200 Cadets

Surendra Singh
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Indian naval cadets will now get dedicated "floating classrooms" at sea as the Indian Navy has launched 'INS Krishna', the first in a new series of indigenous three cadet training ships (CTS).

Unlike earlier when training opportunities at sea were limited, these "dedicated floating classrooms and living labs" have been designed to provide cadets with hands-on experience in navigation, seamanship and watch-keeping in real-world sea conditions.

The three ships, which will serve as the backbone of the Navy's sea training infrastructure for the next 30 years, will host trainees soon after they complete their basic training ashore.

@indianavy

TRAINING INFRA: These 'dedicated floating classrooms and living labs' have been designed to provide cadets with hands-on experience in navigation, seamanship and watch-keeping in real world sea conditions.

In keeping with the Naval traditions, Anupama Chauhan, wife of CDS General Anil Chauhan, launched INS Krishna in the presence of the CDS and senior officials of the armed forces and shipbuilder Larsen & Toubro (L&T). INS Krishna (designated 'Yard 18003)', which was constructed at the L&T shipyard in Kattupalli near Chennai, is planned for formal delivery and operational availability to the Navy by year-end.

The ships will also be used for training cadets from friendly foreign countries, enhancing India's defence cooperation. In addition to training, these ships can be used for non-combatant evacuation operations, humanitarian aid and disaster relief, and search-and-rescue operations.

Krishna can accommodate 20 officers, 150 sailors and 200 cadets simultaneously.

HC to pass interim order on plea against highrise near INS Shikra

Swati.Deshpande
@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: Bombay HC on Wednesday said it would pass an interim order on the petition filed Indian Navy's Local Military Authority challenging as "illegal and unauthorised" the construction of an over 20-storey building near INS Shikra, a highly sensitive naval air station and VVIP helipert at Colaba, on Friday.

A division bench of Justices Ravindra Ghuge and Abhay Mantri posted, as part-heard, to Friday, the petition while saying it was conscious of the sensitivity of the matter. "We are going to extend paramount importance to the security aspect. There is no doubt about it," it orally said to Navy's senior counsel.

BEL, Safran to form equal JV to make Hammer missiles in India

Bengaluru: Hours after defence minister Rajnath Singh and his French counterpart, Catherine Vautrin, concluded the 6th India-France Annual Defence Dialogue in Bengaluru with a headline announcement on local production of Highly Agile Modular Munition Extended Range (Hammer) missiles, defence PSU Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) elaborated on the agreement and said it will form an equal joint venture (JV) with Safran Electronics & Defense.

"The operational issuance of the provisions of the JVA is subject to regulatory and administrative approvals of both countries. BEL and Safran Electronics & Defense also signed a Master Production Agreement (MPA), which sets out the terms of cooperation for transfer of production of Hammer in India," BEL said. ■■

India, US moot Gaganyaan uncrewed docking with ISS

Chethan.Kumar
@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: India and the US are set to deepen their space partnership with an ambitious agenda that includes demonstrating uncrewed docking capabilities with the International Space Station (ISS) under India's Gaganyaan programme.

According to a presentation by Isro chairman V Narayanan reviewed by TOI, the future cooperation areas span three key areas of collaboration between the two nations' space agencies. The first involves comprehensive training of Isro personnel, including astronauts, at Nasa facilities across multiple domains, including robotics systems, extravehicular activity (EVA), extravehicular mobility unit (EMU) systems, resource management, space medicine and spaceflight operations, LEO and lunar mission control operations, rendezvous and docking procedures, and payload and science operations.

An important initiative outlined is the uncrewed docking demonstration of India's Gaganyaan Orbital Module with the US Orbital Segment of the ISS — this would mark a significant technological milestone for India's human spaceflight programme. The third area focuses on cooperation in docking, berthing, and inter-operability systems. These developments will be discussed at the ninth meeting of the India-USA Civil Space Joint Working Group (CSJWG), scheduled to be hosted by India in Bengaluru during April-May 2026.

On the civil space front, Narayanan highlighted India's engagement with the Artemis Accords. India signed the Accords on June 21, 2025, and has since taken part in annual workshops and principals' meetings. In 2026, India led discussions on science data-sharing at the Artemis workshop in Abu Dhabi. Isro was also present at the Artemis Accords principals' meeting held on the margins of the International Astronautical Congress (IAC) in Sydney in Oct 2025. Beyond human spaceflight and lunar frameworks, the partnership extends to operational data exchange. Isro and the US Geological Survey share data between India's Resourcesat-2 and the US Landsat-8 satellites for natural resources assessment and environmental studies.

With the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, India exchanges Earth observation data, particularly from the INSAT-3D satellite, for weather forecasting and ground station use.

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SPOTLIGHT

GoK's 1,000 days of governance

New Era of Innovation and Investment

PRIYANK KHARGE
Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, IT & BT

What have been the significant achievements in your portfolio in these 1000 days?

Over the last 1000 days, our focus in the IT & BT Department has been very clear: to protect Karnataka's leadership in technology while building the foundations for the next phase of growth in innovation, manufacturing, and global collaboration—and to ensure that this growth is inclusive and accessible. We began by strengthening the policy architecture. Karnataka is today the first state in the country to issue sector-specific policies across IT, Startups, AVGC, Robotics/mobility and ESDM, along with a strong focus on cybersecurity. In this period, we rolled out and updated key frameworks such as the Karnataka IT Policy 2025–2030, the Startup Policy 2025–2030, and the Biotechnology Policy 2024–2029, which focuses on bio-manufacturing, R&D, talent and investment. We have also positioned Karnataka as a leading space technology hub through our space-tech policy and ecosystem initiatives. We are also working on a dedicated GCC policy to further accelerate high-value global capability centres, especially beyond Bengaluru.

On the industry and investment side, Karnataka attracted over ₹12,000 crore in GCC investments in 2025 alone, generating more than 20,000 jobs, and over ₹2,500 crore in data centre investments—showing the depth of confidence global companies have in our ecosystem. Karnataka has firmly consolidated its position as India's leading GCC hub, with a clear shift towards higher-value R&D, product engineering and innovation work. A major pillar of this journey has been the startup ecosystem. Through our flagship ELEVATE program, over 1,700 startups have been supported with more than ₹280 crore in grant funding. In the most recent round alone, 148 startups were supported with nearly ₹39 crore, with a strong emphasis on women-led startups and founders from beyond Bengaluru. We also launched the Karnataka Tech Fund, a ₹150 crore deep-tech-focused initiative for AI, robotics, biotech, quantum and other frontier areas—focused on building IP-led, globally competitive companies.

We have also focused on inclusive and accessible technology adoption. A flagship example is KRC Karnataka's AI-ready, affordable personal computer developed with KEONICS, priced at ₹16,999, built on RISC-V with a Linux OS and on-device AI, and preloaded with BUDDHI, aligned to the Karnataka syllabus. This is our practical response to the digital divide and also strengthens Karnataka's position in electronics, semiconductors and AI-led manufacturing.

Other states have been getting aggressive in their tech investment pitches. What have been your efforts and initiatives to keep the state ahead?

Our approach in Karnataka has not been to compete on slogans, but to compete on depth and direction. First, we have focused on moving up the value chain—from services to product engineering, deep tech, R&D and IP creation. That's visible in how GCCs here are evolving and in the kind of work happening across AI, semiconductors, biotech, aerospace and space tech. Second, we have invested in future-facing sectors—AI, deep tech, ESDM, semiconductors, space, biotech and advanced manufacturing. Third, we have prioritised global integration. Through GIA and strategic partnerships, Karnataka is plugged into leading global ecosystems, ensuring companies here build for global markets from day one. Fourth, we have broadened the geography of growth. Fifth, we have made talent and compatibility a strategic advantage—through programmes like NIPUNA Karnataka, with a ₹100 crore allocation to train lakhs of youth in AI, data science, cybersecurity and emerging technologies, in partnership with industry. And finally, we have focused on inclusive and sustainable innovation—from widening access to computing through KEC, to embedding sustainability into platforms like the Tech Summit.

How are your efforts to push tech investments beyond Bengaluru progressing?

Our efforts to push tech investments beyond Bengaluru are deliberate, structured, and already delivering results. Through the Beyond Bengaluru initiative under KDEM, we have adopted a cluster-based strategy with a clear sectoral focus:
- **Mysuru:** IT/ITeS, ESDM, startups, cybersecurity
- **Mangaluru:** Fintech, IT/ITeS, deep-tech, port & logistics tech
- **Hubballi-Dharwad-Belagavi:** IT services, advanced manufacturing
- **Shivamogga:** Emerging tech infrastructure
- **Kalaburagi:** Startups and innovation
- **Tumakuru:** IT/ITeS
- Global Technology Centres (GTCs) in cities like Mysuru, Mangaluru, Hubballi and Belagavi
- Global Innovation Districts (GIDs) for advanced R&D in Bengaluru, and emerging cities
- Tech incentive / Green IT policy under the IT Policy 2025–30
- The ₹135 crore Mangaluru IT Tech Park on PPP mode.

We have also strengthened the local innovation pipeline through:
- LEAP (₹1,000 crore) to build deep-tech infrastructure and target 5 lakh jobs
- GRIP for grassroots innovators
- Technology Business Incubators (TBIs) at IISc, Manipal, VTU, Nanopolis and others, to decentralise innovation

In the backdrop of other states introducing GCC policies, what are your efforts in positioning Karnataka as a favourable investment destination?

Karnataka's advantage lies in execution, ecosystem depth and real market momentum, not just announcements. In 2025, Karnataka's technology ecosystem attracted about USD 3.8 billion in startup funding, led largely by early-stage investments, which shows sustained belief in our innovation pipeline. GCCs accounted for nearly 40% of all co-leasing across India's top cities and Bengaluru alone captured over one-fifth of all GCC-related leasing activity. The city recorded over 12 million square feet of GCC leasing in a single year and now has around 210 million square feet of Grade A office stock, with strong net absorption.

Focus on smaller towns as hubs

SURESHA B S
Minister for Urban Development and Town Planning (including KUWSDB and KUIDFC), excluding Bangalore City Development

What would you highlight as your major legislative and structural achievements during the 1000 days?

Our focus has been on creating a robust legal and administrative framework to handle rapid urbanization. A cornerstone of this effort was the enactment of the Mysuru Development Authority Act, 2024, notified in May 2025. We also recognised that our smaller towns are becoming major hubs; consequently, we upgraded four Planning Authorities—Ainapur, Sirsi, Sindhanur, and Chikkaballapur—to Urban Development Authorities to serve populations exceeding one lakh. Additionally, nine new Planning Authorities, including Kollur and Mandal, were constituted to ensure systematic growth.

Financially, we've injected massive capital into local bodies. Under Amrut Nagarothana (Phase-4), we've released ₹1,000 crore, completing nearly 3,000 works. For our major cities, the Mahatma Gandhi Nagar Vikas Yojane (Phase-2) is targeting essential infrastructure with a ₹5,000 crore allocation, specifically focusing on roads and drainage in 10 City Corporations and Raichur.

Beyond the legislation, how are these initiatives practically changing urban planning and the lives of the working class?

We are moving away from ad-hoc growth. We approved 30 Master Plans to regulate land use and prevent unauthorised layouts. In terms of "Ease of Work" and social dignity, we've taken a major step for our Pourakarmikas (sanitation workers) by regularising 1,427 direct payment workers and providing housing for 847 beneficiaries under the Gift a Shaqga Scheme. For affordable housing, we are leveraging joint partnerships with farmers. A prime example is the 30-acre project in Hassan, which will yield 12,000 plots. Regarding governance and financial health, we've implemented 100% volumetric metering. This ensures that Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) are financially sustainable while providing better service to the public. We've also revitalised the Indira Canteens, approving 186 new units and taking over 100% of the food costs to support the urban poor.

Water and sanitation are often the biggest pain points in growing cities. What specific progress has been made in UGD and water infrastructure?

We are committed to the 'Jal Hi Amrit' philosophy. Under AMRUT 2.0, we've approved 616 projects worth over ₹16,258 crore. Our goal is 24x7 pressurised water supply, which is the only way to effectively eliminate waterborne diseases like cholera. The KUWSDB (World Bank Assisted) project is a game-changer for Hubballi-Dharwad, Belagavi and Kalburagi, where we've already connected over 60,000 households. In terms of sanitation, we've allocated ₹1,358 crore for Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) in 368 towns. We are also tackling the 'legacy waste' problem—the old garbage mountains—with a 440 crore plan covering 222 ULBs under Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0.

Many regions face a looming water crisis. How are you tackling the over-utilization of groundwater?

We have made a strategic, state-wide shift from groundwater dependency to surface water-based systems. By drawing from dependable sources like the Cauvery and Tungabhadra rivers, we are allowing our depleted aquifers to recharge. This reduces borewell dependency and improves long-term drought resilience. We are also aggressively targeting Non-Revenue Water (NRW)—water lost to leaks or theft—with a goal to bring it below 20%. By shifting to a regional water supply model, we are ensuring that even water-stressed regions have a sustainable, long-term supply.

What have been the significant efforts on regional connectivity and its results?

The Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project (BSRP) is our flagship initiative. This ₹15,767 crore project is now in full swing, with 25% physical progress—a massive leap compared to previous years. Major civil works for Corridor-2 and Corridor-4 have been awarded to firms like L&T, and we've secured 800 million Euro in loan agreements with KfW and BB.

But it's not just about trains. It's about Transit Oriented Development (TOD). We are integrating 50 metro stations with multi-modal facilities so that commuting is seamless. We've also commissioned an automatic traffic control system at 28 Bengaluru junctions using Japanese aid. To support our state-wide logistics, we've completed a City Logistics Plan for Bengaluru and are expanding it to seven other cities, including Mysuru and Mangalore, to streamline the movement of essential goods.

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY BHOPAL

(An Institute of National Importance under Ministry of Education, Government of India)
Address: New Teaching Block, MANIT Campus, Bhopal Pin-462003, (M.P.)

IIITBP/Admin/EOI/2026/159 Date:16.02.2026

Expression of Interest (EOI) Inviting Industry Partners

The Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) Bhopal invites Expressions of Interest (EOI) from eligible Industries / Organizations for enrolment as Industry Partners with IIIT Bhopal, as per the Provisions of the IIIT (PPP) Act 2017. The detailed notification, including eligibility criteria and terms & conditions, is available on the Institute website www.iiitbhopal.ac.in Interested parties are advised to visit the website regularly for updates.

Important Timeline:
Last date EOI submission: 09 March 2026 (5.00 P.M.)
Date & Time of EOI Opening: 12 March 2026 (4.00 P.M.)

Registrar(Officiating)

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited

Regd. Office : PSEB Head Office, The Mall Patiala-147001
Corporate Identity No. : U40109PB2010SGC033813
Website : www.pspcl.in (Contact No. 96461-01116)

Tender Enquiry No. 05/CCD/LDH/TS/IPEPCL/2026 Dated : 19.02.2026

ASE/ Grid Construction, opp. PAU Gate No. 1, PSPCL, Ludhiana invites Short Term e-Tender for Outsourcing of 4 no. Augmentation of Power Transformer related works on partial turnkey mode under Grid Construction Division, Ludhiana under Grid Construction Circle, Ludhiana.

For detailed NIT & Tender Specifications please refer to http://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 19.02.2026 (01:00 PM onwards).

Note : Corrigendum and amendments, if any, will be published online at http://eproc.punjab.gov.in.

C.2026, DPR/PC, 1976/1/2026-26#57

KARNATAKA PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

Tumkur Division, Karnataka, Telephone : 0816 2273479.
No.EE/KPWD/Tmk/JE-1/T.No.01/2025-26/ Dt. 17-02-2026

Short term Invitation For Tender (IFT) KW-3&4
E-TENDER NOTIFICATION.

On behalf of Government of Karnataka tenders are invited in Two cover system for Class-1&2 Contractors registered in PWD for **04 works under 4059** CMDP Head of account in the jurisdiction of Tumkur Division through KPPP-Portal (https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in). The details are published as below.

(Maximum amount Put to Tender **Rs.833.00** Lakhs and Minimum amount put to Tender **Rs.79.87 Lakhs**, Maximum EMD Amount **Rs. 9,50,550/-** and Minimum EMD Amount **Rs. 79,570/-**)

1	Last date for tender information enquiries	25-02-2026: 17-30
2	Last date for submission of tender.	26-02-2026 : 15-00
3	Date of opening the Technical bid.	27-02-2026: 16-30
4	Date of opening the Financial bid.	03-03-2026 : 17-00

Note: Turnover Certificate without UDI Number will not be considered. Here after any changes with reference to this Notification will be Notified in E-Portal Only

Sd/- Executive Engineer
PWD Division, Tumkur

DPR/TJM/KD-273/25-26/Solar

KARNATAKA STATE MINERALS CORPORATION LIMITED

(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
Regd. Office : TTMC 'A' Block 5th Floor, BMTC Building, KH Road, Shanthinagar, Bengaluru-560027.
Phone: 080-22278813/14/15/16, Fax : 080-22213172
Website: https://ksmc.karnataka.gov.in

No.152/KSMCL/MECH/SIOM/Excavator/2025-26/3154 Date: 18.02.2026

e-TENDER INVITATION

KSMCL Invites E-tender for Purchase of Hydraulic Excavator (Min 240HP) to Subbarayanahalli Iron Ore Mines Sandur Tq, Bellari District, Karnataka.

CALENDER OF EVENTS

Commencement to Download from website: https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in	18.02.2026
Last date for receiving the queries through e-procurement portal	20.02.2026 up to 11:00 am
Pre-Bid Meeting At Head office Bangalore-27	23.02.2026 At 12:30 pm
Last date and Time for uploading e-tender in E-Procurement platform on or before	04.03.2026 up to 5:00 pm
The Technical bid will be opened online by the Authorized officers on	06.03.2026 At 11:00 am
Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	Rs.2,00,000/-.

Tender documents may be downloaded from e-procurement GOK Platform website: https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in Contact for any support in uploading & registration, E-procurement Helpdesk: 080-46010000/ 68948777.

Sd/-
General Manager (A&V)

DPR/CPS/12/KKR/2025-26

KARNATAKA STATE MINERALS CORPORATION LIMITED

(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
Regd. Office : TTMC 'A' Block 5th Floor, BMTC Building, KH Road, Shanthinagar, Bengaluru-560027.
Phone: 080-22278813/14/15/16, Fax : 080-22213172
Website: https://ksmc.karnataka.gov.in

No.148/KSMCL/MECH/KMM/ Drl-Machine/2025-26/3152 Date: 18.02.2026

e-TENDER INVITATION

KSMCL Invites E-tender for Purchase of Drilling Machine with AC cabin to Karya Magnesite Mine, Hullahalli, Nanjanagudu Tq, Mysore District, Karnataka.

CALENDER OF EVENTS

Commencement to Download from website: https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in	18.02.2026
Last date for receiving the queries through e-procurement portal	20.02.2026 up to 11:00 am
Pre-Bid Meeting At Head office Bangalore-27	23.02.2026 At 11:30 am
Last date and Time for uploading e-tender in E-Procurement platform on or before	04.03.2026 up to 5:00 pm
The Technical bid will be opened online by the Authorized officers on	06.03.2026 At 11:00 am
Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	Rs.1,74,000/-

Tender documents may be downloaded from e-procurement GOK Platform website: https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in Contact for any support in uploading & registration, E-procurement Helpdesk: 080-46010000/ 68948777.

Sd/-
General Manager (A&V)

DPR/CPS/12/KKR/2025-26

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

SEAL NIT SAKE

Gujarat State Livelihoods Promotion Company Limited (GSLPC) invites sealed tenders from eligible bidders through e-tendering portal from eligible and interested parties for the following categories:

Sr. No.	Tender ID	Tender Description	List for accessing the Tender Documents
1	276435	Kale Cultivated for supply of Rooftop House across State.	https://gujtenders.nprocure.com
2	276436	Supply of Goods from Rural Farmers as well as Stores & Godowns.	https://www.gujcongas.com/gujt-current-tender/
3	276435	Supply and Transportation of Goods to Rural Farmers	

Any revision / corrigendum / amendments, if any, will be published only related to the notice will be updated on the above referred websites only. Interested parties should regularly visit these websites and keep themselves updated.

KARNATAKA RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT LIMITED

(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
Gramoorthi Kendra Bhavana, 4th & 5th Floor,
Ananda Rao Circle, Bengaluru - 560 009.

No: KRIDL/ACT/TND/FD/2025-26 Date:18.02.2026

SHORT-TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

KRIDL invites tenders through e-bidding from Public Sector Banks/ Regional Rural Banks/Private Sector banks for **Investment of about Rs. 436.00 crore in Fixed deposit for a period of one year.** Other terms and conditions may be viewed on e-Procurement portal. Website: **www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in e-Proc Helpdesk Contact:** 9240214000, 9240214001.

- Date of Publishing of e-Auction Notification: **18.02.2026**
- Last date for submission of bid is on **02.03.2026 at 15.00 hrs.**
- Date of Opening of Technical Bid is on **04.03.2026 at 15.00 hrs.**
- Date of Opening e-Auction is on **07.03.2026, 10.30 AM to 3.00 PM**

For further details please contact:
Chief Finance Officer
KARNATAKA RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT LTD,
Bengaluru-09. Phone: 080-28015600 Email: cfo-i@kridl.net
Sd/- Chief Finance Officer

Gujarat State Police Housing Corporation Ltd.

Registered & Head Office
Bh. Lokayan Bhavan, "Ok" Road Sector 10-D, Gandhinagar - 382010
CIN: U42301GJ1988SGC011431
Website : www.gsphc.gujarat.gov.in E-Mail : gsphc@gujarat.gov.in Phone :(079) 23254401-06

"Expression of Interest for Aluminium Shuttering Formwork (Based on MIVAN Technology) with all necessary fittings manufacturer/brands to empanel with GSPHCL."

The Gujarat State Police Housing Corporation a Government of Gujarat undertaking involved in Construction of Residential/ Non Residential Buildings for the police department as well as other department under the Home Department, Government of Gujarat. The Corporation intends to empanel manufacturers/brands of Aluminium Shuttering formwork (Based on MIVAN Technology) with all necessary fittings, for a period of three years. The corporation intends to arrange Presentation before finalization of manufacturer/brands. The schedule of Presentation will be discuss after receiving the physical documents of manufacturer. Only manufacturer that meet the criteria prescribed by the GSPHCL will be invited for presentation and shall be informed by e-mail.

The details of the "Expression of interest" as well as other terms and conditions are available at the website of the Corporation, www.gsphc.gujarat.gov.in in the tender section. Eligible manufacturers/brands should send the required details in the prescribed format in hard copy by registered post by 18.00 hours, 17/03/2026 mentioning clear on envelope "Expression of Interest for Aluminium Shuttering Formwork (Based on MIVAN Technology) with all necessary fittings manufacturer/brands to empanel with GSPHCL". For any queries regarding the above, you may contact the Executive Engineer (Quality Control) during office hours, on the above mentioned address or by email.

Managing Director

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

NOTIFICATION
Bengaluru, 18th February 2026

S. O. 891(E). In the exercise of the powers conferred by clause (B) of section 20F and clause 7A of section 2 of the Railway Act, 1989 (24 of 1989) the Ministry of Railways (South Western Railway, Construction Organization, Bengaluru Cantonment) hereby authorises the officer mentioned at column (4) in the table below as "Competent Authority" and the officer mentioned at column (5) in the table below as "Arbitrator" to perform the functions as such authority under the said act with effect from date of publication of this notification in the official gazette in respect of Special Railway Projects mentioned at column (2) relating to districts mentioned at column (3) in the table below for Land Acquisition required for the public purpose.

Sl. No.	Name of the Project	District	Competent Authority	Arbitrator
1	Construction of Road Over Bridge in lieu of Level Crossing No. 72 at Km. 184/200-300 in Mulavad village.	Vijayapura	Assistant Commissioner Vijayapur	Regional Commissioner Belagavi
2	Construction of Road Over Bridge in lieu of Level Crossing No. 113 at Km. 260/800-700 in Lachyan village.	Vijayapura	Assistant Commissioner Vijayapur	Regional Commissioner Belagavi

No.W.271/CN/BNC/2025-26/Land SRP/1727

For details log on: https://egazette.gov.in

Pardeep Puri, Chief Engineer, Construction - III, Bengaluru Cantonment

PUB/0001/0445/0026/0001/2025-26

Download the RailOne app. RailOne is the all-in-one railway app by Indian Railways. Passengers can book reserved tickets, unreserved tickets, platform tickets, and season passes, check PNR status, order food, and access many more services at their fingertips. Use digital payment to book unreserved tickets through RailOne app, and enjoy up to a 3% discount.

South Western Railway-SWR | @swrly | @swrly | @swr_railway

KARNATAKA HOUSING BOARD

3rd Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, Bengaluru.

TENDER NOTIFICATION

Karnataka Housing Board has invite tender through KPP Portal for the below mentioned works from the eligible contractors who are empanelled in Karnataka Housing Board & also willing to empanel in KHB.

Sl. No.	Name of Work and Place	Work Indent & IFT No.	Amount put to tender (in Rs.)
1.	Sites & Services Scheme at **Block-A**, Chunchanakuppe village, Yavarekere Hobli, Bengaluru South Taluk, Bengaluru Urban District.	Tender Reference No. KHB/2025-26/OW WORK_INDENT 706 & IFT No. 149/2025-26 Date: 06.02.2026	18,55,82,280/-
2.	Sites & Services Scheme at **Block-B**, Chunchanakuppe village, Yavarekere Hobli, Bengaluru South Taluk, Bengaluru Urban District.	Tender Reference No. KHB/2025-26/OW WORK_INDENT 707 & IFT No. 150/2025-26 Date: 06.02.2026	30,38,71,920/-
3.	Sites & Services Scheme at **Block-C**, Chunchanakuppe village, Yavarekere Hobli, Bengaluru South Taluk, Bengaluru Urban District.	Tender Reference No. KHB/2025-26/OW WORK_INDENT 708 & IFT No. 151/2025-26 Date: 06.02.2026	17,94,29,649/-

LAST DATE FOR SUBMISSION OF BID: 07-03-2026 UP TO 4.00 PM

For further information, contact below mentioned Office Address:
Executive Engineer, Karnataka Housing Board, Cauvery Bhavan, Bengaluru.
Telephone No.: 080-22273011. Website: https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in

DPR/CPY/OY/2025-26 **Sd/- Executive Engineer, KHB, Bengaluru**

KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD

(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
No.2, 2/1 and 2/3, Kalidasa Marg, 1st Main Road, Gandhinagar
Bengaluru - 560 009. Phone No. 080-22265383, website: www.kiadb.in

IADB/ENGG/ETND-EP-82/2084/2025-26 Date: 18.02.2026

SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING TENDER
(Through GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Only)

Item rate Tenders under two cover bid system is invited as per the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act 1999 and Rules 2000 through electronic procurement from eligible Contractors who have got adequate financial resources, suitable construction equipments, technical man power & sufficient past experience for the works as per the schedule given below:

Name of the Works : 1) Providing Street lights to the roads of Sarathi Kurubarahalli Industrial Area, Phase-1, Harihara Taluk, Davanagere District. (2nd Call).

2) Shifting of existing 66kV Kora to Thovinakere SC Line passing over the premises of Japanese Industrial Park at Vasanthanarasapura Industrial Area, Tumakuru Taluk & District.

3) Improvements of approach road (ODC Road) connecting Balkampady Industrial Area from Y Junction, Mangaluru Taluk, Dakshina Kannada District.

The last date and time of receipt of tender is : **05.03.2026** upto **4.00 pm.**

Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the Karnataka Public Procurement Portal **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.**

Sd/-
Chief Engineer-1, KIADB Bengaluru

DIPR/CP/5725/Zes/2025-26

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS

E-TENDER NOTICE

Tender Notice No: PCMM/CLW/HWH/E-Procurement/26/06, Dated: 12/02/2026. PCMM/CLW/Howrah on behalf of the President of India invites electronic bids from established reliable manufacturer for supply of the followings. The following E-Tender is for supply of materials for manufacture of Electric Locomotive. The Prospective/Bidly suppliers are requested to look up the website www.ireps.gov.in for detailed instructions. These are E-Tenders only electronic offer bids shall be accepted. **Sl. No.; Tender No.; Description of Stores; Quantity; Due on; Tender Cost are as follows : [012]; 1425274981**; Ckt. Breaker without Auxiliary Contacts Type-8, CLW's Spec. No. CLW/ES/3/ as per Spec. CLW/ES3/050; As per Tender/ Document; 05/03/2026; ₹ 0.00. **[013]; 30262983**; Gas Acetylene Dissolved Spec.: IS308/1962; As per Tender/ Document; 09/03/2026; ₹ 0.00. **[014]; 30262988**; Industrial Liquid Oxygen Gas Spec.: IS308/92; As per Tender/ Document; 13/03/2026; ₹ 0.00.

(PB6308) PCMM/CLW/Howrah

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National Highways Authority of India

(Ministry of Road Transport & Highways)
Government of India

PUBLIC NOTICE

User Fee rates for FY 2025-26 at Toll Plaza in Hediganahalle, Agrahara, Krishnarajapura, And Sunderpalya on NH-7

1. The public are hereby informed that pursuant to Govt. of India Gazette Notification No. S.O.2712(E) dated 16.06.2025, and approval of Competent Authority, NHAI vide letter dated 31.01.2026, the User fee rates at Hediganahalle, Agrahara, Krishnarajapura, And Sunderpalya, w.e.f 15.02.2025 (00:00 Hrs) for the use of 4 Lanting of Expressway from km 0.000 to km 71.00 (length 0.700 approach towards NH 207 with interchange on NH4 at start point) of Bangalore Bethamangala Section of Bangalore Chennai Expressway will be levied w.e.f. 15.02.2026 (00:00 Hrs) as below:-

Four lane from Km (-)00.700 to Km 71.000 (length 71.700Km) on Phase-1 (Pkg-1, Pkg-2 & Pkg-3) (along with 0.700 km approach towards NH 207 with interchange on NH-4 at Start Point of Bangalore to Bethamangala Section) of NE-7 in the State of Karnataka

At Hediganahalle Toll plaza

	Category	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journeys in a month
From Agrahara Toll Plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	65	80	1,764
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	85	130	2,835
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	180	265	5,940
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	195	290	6,480
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	280	420	9,320
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	340	510	11,350
From Krishnarajapura Toll plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	120	180	3,960
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	190	290	6,410
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	400	590	13,430
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	440	660	14,690
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	630	950	21,095
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	770	1,155	25,635
From Sunderpalya Toll plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	140	220	4,880
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	230	355	7,800
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	485	740	16,465
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	540	810	17,950
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	770	1,160	25,600
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	940	1,410	31,410

At Agrahara Toll Plaza

	Category	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journeys in a month
From Hediganahalle Toll Plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	50	75	1,660
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	80	120	2,585
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	170	255	5,610
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	185	275	6,120
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	265	395	8,800
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	320	480	10,715
From Krishnarajapura Toll plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	75	110	2,470
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	120	180	3,990
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	250	375	8,360
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	275	410	9,120
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	395	590	13,115
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	485	720	15,995
From Sunderpalya Toll plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	100	150	3,360
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	160	245	5,435
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	340	510	11,385
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	370	560	12,420
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	530	795	17,605
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	650	980	21,740

At Krishnarajapura Toll Plaza

	Category	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journeys in a month
From Hediganahalle Toll Plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	120	180	3,960
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	190	290	6,410
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	405	605	13,475
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	440	660	14,700
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	630	950	21,130
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	770	1160	25,725
From Agrahara Toll Plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	75	110	2,420
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	115	175	3,915
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	250	370	8,250
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	270	405	8,945
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	395	590	12,990
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	470	705	15,555
From Sunderpalya Toll plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	40	60	1,300
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	65	95	2,110
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	120	200	4,410
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	145	215	4,820
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	210	310	6,925
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	255	380	8,435

At Sunderpalya Toll Plaza

	Category	Fee for Single Journey	Fee for return Journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single Journeys in a month
From Hediganahalle Toll Plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	140	215	4,740
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	230	345	7,650
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	485	720	16,045
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	525	790	17,505
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	755	1,130	25,190
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	920	1380	30,620
From Agrahara Toll Plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	95	145	3,180
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	160	230	5,140
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	320	485	10,770
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	355	530	11,790
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	505	760	16,890
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	615	925	20,590
From Krishnarajapura Toll plaza	Car/Jeep/Van/LMV	35	55	1,220
	LCV/LGV/Mini Bus	60	90	1,970
	Truck/Bus (2 Axle)	125	185	4,135
	3 Axle Commercial Vehicle	135	205	4,560
	Heavy Construction Machinery/Earth Moving Equipment or Multi Axle Vehicle (MAV) (4-6 Axles)	195	290	6,475
	Oversized vehicles (7 or more axle)	235	355	7,885

2. The following concessions are available as per the Gazette Notification at above Toll Plaza:-
a. For Return journey within 24 hours from time of payment for all categories of vehicles the amount payable is one-half times the fee for one way journey (Discount 25%).
b. For 50 Single journey in a month from date of payment for all categories of vehicles the Fee payable is Two-third of amount of the fee payable for fifty single journeys (Discount 33%).
c. The driver or owner or a person in charge of a mechanical vehicle which is loaded in excess of permissible load specified for its category, shall be liable to pay fee for entering the overloaded vehicle on the National Highway in the fee collecting agency, as laid down specified in sub - rule (4) of rule 16 of the said rules, and shall not be entitled to make use of the highway section unless the excess load has been removed from such mechanical vehicle.
4. The rates published above are for the year FY 2025-26 and shall be revised w.e.f from 01.04.2026 which is annual rate revision for all the user fee plazas across the country as per rule 5 of NH fee rule 2008 and its amendments.
3. The list of exempted vehicles is as given in the amendment to NH Fee Rules dated 03.12.2010 vide GSR 816 E.
4. The Toll notification for the Plaza S.O No.2712 (E) dated 16.06.2025 has been published in Gazette of India.
5. For any complaints, emergency suggestion and feedback please contact NHAI Helpline number 1033 or contact Office of the Project Director, PIU Bangalore, Beside Nagasandra Metro Station, Pin No. 560073.

NOT JUST ROADS, BUILDING A NATION

Upset over her remarriage, ex-hubby kills pregnant woman

Srinath Vedali
@timesofindia.com

Hyderabad: A three-month pregnant woman was hacked to death inside her house here on Wednesday, allegedly by her ex-husband who was unhappy with her remarriage. The two software professionals divorced in 2024 after briefly living in Canada. The woman had earlier filed a domestic violence complaint against the accused, following which a Look Out Circular (LOC) was issued against him.

Police said Devarakonda Mahesh barged into the fourth-floor apartment of Sunitha, 29, in Vanasthalipuram around noon on Wednesday, went to the room where she was and locked it from inside. He was carrying a bag with two knives, a bottle of petrol and a chainsaw.

"Mahesh got into a heated argument with Sunitha and attacked her with the knives, stabbing multiple times," said T Mahesh, inspector, Vanasthalipuram. "On hearing the victim's screams, other family members rushed to see Sunitha lying on the floor in a pool of blood. The accused had locked himself in the washroom."

Have 'zero tolerance' towards unruly flyers, DGCA tells airlines

Regulator: Must Report Such Passengers

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

DGCA struck a balance between ensuring passenger rights and giving powers of reporting unruly behaviour to airlines

New Delhi: *Unruly flyers be* ware, India has now decided to adopt a 'no/zero tolerance policy' towards them with immediate effect to "ensure the safety of aircraft/persons/property and to maintain good order and discipline on board". The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has consent with draft rules for handling such passengers in aircraft.

The big change proposed by DGCA chief Faiz Ahmed Kidwai is that airlines will now have powers to prevent a repeat offender from travelling on board the aircraft. The SOP will need to be communicated throughout the organisation and especially to all employees who are in direct contact with passengers, both on the ground and on the aircraft.

"All airlines shall establish (a) mechanism to detect and report unruly passenger behaviour at check-in, in the lounges, at the boarding gate or any other place in the terminal building or at the airside in order to prevent such passengers from boarding. Such cases shall be reported immediately with law enforcement agency at the aerodrome," it says.

"The home ministry may provide to DGCA and to airlines, a list of individuals identified as national security threats for inclusion in the No-Fly List. Such cases will not be covered by appeal provisions as provided under (rules). Further, national security threats list provided by ministry of home affairs shall be shared with the airlines. However, this list will not be a part of published No Fly List. Separately, law enforcement agencies may take action in accordance with applicable law under the Prison Act, 1894," the draft says.

Such people will be barred till the time the home ministry deems them to be a national security risk.

The regulator has also struck a balance between ensuring passenger rights and giving powers of reporting unruly behaviour to airlines. "Unruly behaviour could be the result of an event of unsatisfactory service/condition or effect of a series of such events that build up. Airline staff should observe early signs of potential unruly behaviour. Airlines shall focus and act on these early signs, rather than dealing exclusively with escalated events. At no stage, the airline staff/crew member shall show discourteous behaviour during redressal of genuine passenger rights," the draft says.

The draft proposes that the no-fly rules apply to "all passengers during the period of air travel to/from India".

Four categories

Level 1: Unruly behaviour including physical gestures, verbal harassment and unruly inebriation

Level 2: Physically abusive behaviour like pushing, kicking, hitting, grabbing or inappropriate touching or sexual harassment.

Level 3: Life-threatening behaviour (damage to aircraft operating systems, physical violence such as choking, eye gouging, murderous assault.

Level 4: Attempted or actual breach of the flight crew compartment.

Jet sprays to replace taps, mugs in trains

New Delhi: The railway ministry has directed all zones to replace low-flow taps and chained stainless steel mugs with jet sprays in train toilets. The direction was issued after a successful trial by the Northern Railway, which was aimed at preventing water stagnation in toilets and improving hygiene standards for passengers.

In a circular issued Tuesday, the ministry said water accumulation on coach low-tray floors results in unhygienic conditions.

Over time, undulations develop on the toilet floor, and continued use leads to puddle formation and water accumulation, it said.

The circular referred to the Northern Railway's Delhi and Ambala divisions that replaced low-level taps and chained mugs with jet sprays in Shatabdi Express coaches. Officials said the intervention has shown improvement — with toilet floors remaining dry and hygienic.

The ministry has asked zones to implement these changes as a pilot in AC coaches of 10 identified trains and submit feedback in three months. TNN

MP child-lifting rumours trigger chaos, mob attacks

Karishma Kotwal
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Indore: A viral video of a woman being beaten in Indore has exposed a disturbing surge in mob violence fuelled by rumours of child-lifting, with innocent people being attacked across multiple districts of Madhya Pradesh without any evidence of kidnapping.

The woman in the video, was later identified as 45-year-old Rekha Devi, a mentally unstable woman who has been missing from Meerut for over a year. After her daughter traced her through the clip, police confirmed Rekha had been questioned and released, as she was not involved in any crime. She has since gone missing again.

Rekha's case is part of a wider pattern of panic-driven attacks in Indore and neighbouring districts, where strangers are being publicly confronted and beaten on mere suspicion of being child-lifters. Police said none of the recent cases involved any actual kidnapping.

In Ratlam district, six men returning from a temple were dragged out of their car and assaulted by villagers after stopping at a roadside dhaba. A 34-year-old researcher beaten and filmed by a group of women, who accused her of child-lifting, in Indore's MIG area.

In Dhar district, five itinerant workers from Rajasthan narrowly escaped after being attacked over similar rumours. Devas police have arrested two men for spreading false messages and inciting attacks on passersby.

Senior officers have warned that rumours circulating on WhatsApp and local networks are triggering fear and mob violence.

"There is no confirmed child abduction gang operating in Indore or nearby districts," said Indore police commissioner Santosh Kumar Singh. "People must not act on rumours or take the law into their own hands." Police have urged citizens to report suspicious activity instead of confronting individuals, stressing that rumour-mongering and mob assault are criminal offences.

Gandhinagar to get India's largest library

Gandhinagar: The Gujarat govt on Wednesday announced a budgetary allocation of Rs 100 crore for setting up the Namo Central Library, the largest in the country, in Gandhinagar.

"Study and reading facilities will be provided in digital form here," Kanu Desai, state finance minister, said in his budget speech.

An additional Rs 30 crore was allocated to set up digital libraries in municipal corporations. Desai said 35 such libraries are proposed to be set up in 2026-27 as part of the govt's current programme to set up Birsa Munda libraries in all tribal taluks. TNN

HC quashes FIR against Gupta brother in builder suicide case

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The high court cited the lack of forensic evidence and concurred with the defendant's plea

Dehradun: Uttarakhand high court has ordered the quashing of the FIR registered against Ajay Kumar Gupta, one of the three South Africa-returned Gupta brothers and his brother-in-law Anil Kumar Gupta in connection with the suicide of prominent Dehradun-based builder Satinder Singh Sawhney.

Sawhney had named the two in a suicide note before illegally ending his life by jumping from the terrace of the seven-storey apartment complex, where his daughter lived, in May 2025. In the note, he alleged that the brothers had put pressure on him to hand over two residential projects worth more than Rs 1,000 crore that he was developing.

Police said Sawhney had entered into a partnership with the Guptas for the projects on the condition that they would not interfere in his operations. However, his family alleged that the brothers later began harassing him to transfer the projects to their names and also got a case registered against him in Saharanpur on charges of fraud and blackmail. Following his death, the Guptas were charged under IPC sections 306 (abetment of suicide), 385 (extortion), 420 (cheating), and 120-B (criminal conspiracy) based on a complaint filed by Sawhney's son.

Police filed the final report in Nov last year, stating that investigators found insufficient evidence to support the allegations and recommended closure of the case.

Counsel for the Guptas argued the allegations of harassment, financial disputes, or conflict, even if accepted at face value, do not amount to incitement. He said the FIR and the material collected during the probe "did not disclose any direct or active role by the applicants that could have driven the deceased to suicide".

Maha cancels caste certs circular linked to 5% Muslim quota

Priyanka.Kakodkar@timesofindia.com

Mumbai: Eleven years after the BJP-Sena govt led by Devendra Fadnavis scrapped the 5% Muslim quota in govt jobs and education, the Mahayuti govt has cancelled a circular outlining the process of issuing caste validity certificates for the quota. Officials said the long-delayed process was completed after a query was raised in the last state assembly session.

The 5% minority quota had been introduced by the Congress-NCP govt led by Prithviraj Chavan in June 2014. However, the ordinance lapsed by Dec 2014 since it had not been converted into an Act under the subsequent BJP-Sena govt led by Fadnavis. A high court petition also led to a stay on the quota for jobs.

In March 2015, the Fadnavis govt issued an order officially cancelling the ordinance. However, a related circular on caste validity certificates for minorities issued by the social justice department was overlooked. It is this circular which has now been cancelled. "This is just a formality. Once the ordinance lapsed in 2014, all resolutions and circulars based on it became void," said an official.

However, television channels wrongly reported on Wednesday that the 5% minority quota had been cancelled by the govt's order, leading to outrage from the opposition.

Mumbai Congress chief Varsha Gaikwad said the govt's decision was "harmful to democracy" and would push the Muslim community further away from the mainstream.

"Instead of strengthening the process, the govt has cancelled earlier procedures citing interim stay orders of the high court and lapse of the ordinance. On one hand, the BJP speaks of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' (development for all), and on the other hand it blocks the path for securing the necessary documents for the reservation," Gaikwad added.

AIMIM MP Imtiaz Jaleel said sarcastically on X, "The Maharashtra government announces Ramadan gift for Muslims by scrapping 5% reservation in education. This was given after HC had noted that the education department drop out rate was the highest among Muslims. But we still tell our boys and girls not to leave education."

Nagpur HC upholds WhatsApp summons

Vaibhav.Gangurde@timesofindia.com

Nagpur: In a ruling clarifying the legal status of electronic communication in criminal proceedings, the Nagpur bench of Bombay high court last week held that summons issued through WhatsApp message is legally valid under Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023, and set aside an order imposing costs on a police personnel for effecting such service.

Justice Urmila Joshi-Phalke quashed a Jan 2 order of a Pocso court in Nagpur, which directed recovery of costs from constable Santosh Ramtake on the ground that summons served through a mobile phone was "not allowed". The HC faulted the trial court for ignoring amended provisions under BNSS. The Pocso court noted that two prosecution witnesses in a pending case were absent, and that the summons was served via mobile phone, resulting in delay in recording evidence. The court imposed costs on the constable for not serving the summons through a "legal mode".

PHOENIX ARC PRIVATE LIMITED

Reg Office : 3rd Floor, Wallace Towers, 139/140&1, Crossing of Sahar Road and Western Express Highway, Vile Parle East, Mumbai-400057,
Tel : 022- 68482450, Fax : 022- 67412313, CIN: U67190MH2007PTC168303; Email: info@phoenixarc.co.in; Website: www.phoenixarc.co.in

ONLINE E-AUCTION SALE OF ASSETS

In exercise of the powers under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (in short referred to as SARFAESI Act) and Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 (in short referred to as RULES) and pursuant to the possession of the secured asset mentioned hereunder vested with the Authorised Officer under the said SARFAESI Act and RULES for recovery of the secured debts, the Authorised Officer has decided to sell the secured asset by way of e-auction sale.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and to the borrower, mortgagor and guarantor in particular, that the under mentioned property mortgaged to consortium of lenders being Phoenix ARC Private Limited acting in capacity as Trustee of Phoenix Trust FY18-23 (Phoenix) (pursuant to assignment of debt by State Bank of Hyderabad (SBH) in favour of Phoenix vide an Assignment Agreement dated 29-03-2019), State Bank of India, Axis Bank, Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, Punjab National Bank, IDBI Bank Central Bank of India, Bank of Maharashtra, Union Bank of India and Pegasus Assets Reconstruction Private Limited will be sold on **"AS IS WHERE IS, AS IS WHATEVER THERE IS AND WITHOUT RECOURSE"** condition, by way of an **"online e-auction"** for recovery of dues and further interest, charges and costs etc. as detailed below in terms of the provisions of SARFAESI Act read with Rules 8 & 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 through website https://www.bankeauctions.com as per the details given below:

Name of Borrower	Base Corporation Limited (In Liquidation)
Name of the Guarantor	Mr. Girish Arora; Mr. Aditya Arora; Mrs. Radha Devi Arora; Mr. Rakesh Sharma; Base Holding Limited; Pragati Goods Private Limited; Girish Sons Investments Limited; Wafin Leasing and Finance Private Limited; Base Leisures Private Limited; Satisfield Distributors Private Limited; Popular Tie Up Private Limited; Maxim Tie Up Private Limited; Dayen Vanijya Private Limited; Skylark Vanijya Private Limited; Manikaran Vyapaar Private Limited; Rasil Tradecom Private Limited; Onkar Sales Private Limited; Pragati Goods Private Limited; Pipon Vincom Private Limited
Amount due as on the date of Section 13(2) Notice under SARFAESI Act dated 18-04-2017	Rs.1966,41,44,299.31/- (Rupees One Thousand Five Hundred and Sixty-Five Crores Forty-One Lakhs Forty-Four Thousand Two Hundred Nine and Paise Thirty-One Only) as on 31-03-2017 with further interest, charges, costs, etc.
Possession Status	In Possession
Inspection	On Request
Reserve Price	Rs.18,45,30,000/- (Rupees Eighteen Crores Forty-Five Lakhs Only)
Earnest Money Deposit (EMD Amount)	Rs.1,84,53,000/- (Rupees One Crore Eighty-Four Lakhs Fifty Thousand Only)
Bid Increment	Rs. 5,00,000/- (Rupees Five Lakhs Only) & in such multiples
Bank Account Details	The Earnest Money must be deposited by way of RTGS/NEFT Favouring "PHOENIX TRUST FY16-23", Bank Name: Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited, Current Account No: 0711733334, Branch: Kalina IFSC Code: KKBK0000631
Last Date of submission of Bid (E-Auction)	06th March, 2026 (Friday) on or before closure of banking hours
Date of E-Auction	09th March, 2026 (Monday) between 11.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon
Mode of E-Auction	Online – e-auction
Link for Sale Notice and Tender Documents	https://phoenixarc.co.in/?p=8919

Description of the Secured Asset being auctioned : All that piece and parcel of Converted (Undeveloped) land property bearing Survey No. 229/9, admeasuring 1 Acre 10 guntas (total area 54450 sq. ft.) situated at Gunjur Village, Varthur Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk and **bounded as: East by:** Survey No. 229/8 and proposed peripheral ring road, **West by:** Survey No. 229/5, **North by:** Survey No. 229/12 belonging to Smt. Girija and Survey No. 228, **South by:** Survey No. 229/8 Together with all the buildings and structures thereon, fixtures and fittings both present and future

Terms and Conditions of E-Auction

1. The Auction Sale is being conducted by the Authorised Officer under the provisions of SARFAESI Act with the aid and through e-auction. Auction/Bidding shall be only through "Online Electronic Mode" through the website https://www.bankeauctions.com, M/s. C1 India Private Limited is the service provider to arrange platform for e-auction.
2. The Auction is conducted as per the Terms and Conditions of the Bid Document and as per the procedure set out therein. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale the bidders may go through the website of Phoenix, www.phoenixarc.co.in and the links mentioned herein above as well as the website of the service provider, www.bankeauctions.com for bid documents, the details of the secured assets put up for auction/ obtaining the bid form.
3. The bidders may participate in the e-auction quoting/bidding from their own offices/ place of their choice. Internet connectivity shall have to be arranged by each bidder himself/itself. The Authorised Officer/ Phoenix/ service provider shall not be held responsible for the internet connectivity, network problems, system crash down, power failure etc.
4. For details, help, procedure and online training on e-auction, prospective bidders may contact **Mr. Bhavik Pandya of M/s C 1 India Private Limited, Contact Number: +91-124-4302020/2021/2022/2023/2024, +91-8866682937 , Email ID: support@bankeauctions.com; maharashtra@c1india.com**
5. Bidders may also go through the website of Phoenix, www.phoenixarc.co.in for verifying the details of the secured asset put up for auction/ obtaining the bid form.
6. The e-auction will be conducted on the date and time mentioned herein above, when the secured asset mentioned above will be sold on **"AS IS WHERE IS" basis and "AS IS WHAT IT IS" & "WITHOUT RECOURSE" condition.**
7. All the intending purchasers/ bidders are required to register their name in the portal mentioned above as https://www.bankeauctions.com and get user ID and password free of cost to participate in the e-auction on the date and time as mentioned aforesaid.
8. For participating in the e-auction, intending purchasers/ bidders will have to submit the details of payment of refundable Earnest Money Deposit of 10% of the Reserve Price of the Secured asset and KYC documents (PAN CARD, Board Resolutions in case of Company and Address Proof as per terms detailed in Tender Documents, on or before the last date for submission of EMD mentioned above.
9. The prospective intending bidder shall furnish an undertaking that he/she is not de-classified as per provisions of Sec.29 (A) of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 and failure to furnish such undertaking along with the KYC documents, shall automatically disqualify and the bid so submitted will be rejected.
10. The successful purchaser/ bidder shall deposit the 25% (inclusive of EMD) of his/ its offer for each of the item by way of RTGS/NEFT to the account mentioned herein above on or before the close of banking hours on the date of Auction mentioned above or not later than the next working day, which deposit shall have to be confirmed by Phoenix, failing which the sale will be deemed to have been failed and the EMD of the said successful purchaser/ bidder shall be forfeited.
11. The EMD of all other bidders who did not succeed in the e-auction will be refunded by Phoenix within 5 working days of the closure e-auction. The EMD deposited by the unsuccessful bidder shall not carry any interest.
12. The balance amount of purchase consideration shall be payable by the successful purchaser/ bidder on or before the fifteenth (15) day of confirmation of sale of the said secured asset or such extended period as may be agreed to in writing. In case of default, all amounts deposited till then shall be liable to be forfeited.
13. No additions / deletions / Amendment of names of the bidders shall be permitted after acceptance of the bid. The name of the Bidder(s) submitted at the time of registration shall only be considered for this purpose.
14. For inspection of the property/ies or more information, the prospective bidders may contact **Mr. Harish Magia / Mr. Brij Kishore Bilochi / Ms. Jayeshri, at following email address harish.magia@phoenixarc.co.in / brijkishore.bilochi@sbi.co.in / sbi.04206@sbi.co.in / jeneali** or on +91-7596167962 / +91-9425521969 / +91-8409523237 (Mob).
15. At any stage of the auction, the Authorised officer reserves his right to vary any of the terms and condition of this notice for sale, without prior notice, at his discretion and the Authorised Officer may accept/reject/ modify/cancel the bid/offer or postpone the auction without assigning any reason thereof and without any prior notice.
16. The successful purchaser/bidder shall bear any statutory dues, taxes, fees payable, stamp duty, registration fees, etc. that is required to be paid in order to get the property conveyed/delivered in his/her/its favour as per the applicable law.
17. The payment of all statutory/non statutory dues, taxes, rates, assessments, charges, society dues, fees etc. owing to the property during any time, shall be the sole responsibility of the successful bidder only.
18. It shall solely be the responsibility of the successful bidder to get the sale certificate registered. The successful purchaser/bidder shall be solely responsible for obtaining E-Khata, any cost / expenses / fees / charges etc. payable to the society/ any other authority towards the transfer of the rights in its / his / her favour. The sale certificate must be registered at the earliest as per state Law/Rules regarding transfer else the purchaser has to give the request letter to the Authorised Officer of Phoenix mentioning the reason of delaying the registration.
19. It is the responsibility of the successful bidder to obtain the NOC from the relevant authorities concerned as required for Registry of the sale including the payment of fee, taxes as applicable. All charges on account of obtaining necessary clearances or approvals, charges (including but not limited to society charges, NOC Charges, electricity, water, society charges, maintenance charges and charges required for transfer of the said property in favor of the successful bidder) should be undertaken by the successful bidder at its own cost, effort and liabilities.
20. The Secured Asset under e-auction as mentioned in sale Notice shall remain and be at the sole risk of the successful purchaser in all respects including loss or damage by fire or theft or other accidents, and other risk from the date of the confirmation of the Sale by the Authorized Officer. The successful bidder shall not be entitled to annul the sale on any ground of whatsoever nature.
21. The Borrower/ Mortgagor, who are liable for the said outstanding dues, shall treat this Sale Notice as a notice under Rule 8 Clause (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, about the holding of the above-mentioned auction sale. The borrowers/mortgagor are also hereby informed that they must take delivery of their personal house-hold belongings/articles lying inside the said secured asset under the custody of Phoenix, if any within 7 days from the date of publication, with prior information to Phoenix failing which the Phoenix shall have no liability/responsibility to the same and will dispose-of at the risk of borrowers/ mortgagor.
22. To the best of knowledge and information of the authorized officer, there are no encumbrances on the secured asset, except, if any, mentioned in table above. The intending bidders shall make their own independent enquiries regarding encumbrances, title of secured asset put on auction and claims/rights/dues affecting the secured assets, including statutory dues, etc prior to submitting their bid. The auction advertisement does not constitute and will not constitute any commitment or any representation of Phoenix. The authorised officer of Phoenix shall not be responsible in any way for any third-party claims/rights/dues. No claim of whatsoever nature will be entertained after submission of the online bid regarding secured asset put for sale.
23. The particulars specified in the e-auction notice published in the newspaper have been stated to the best of the information of the Authorised Officer, however, the Authorised Officer shall not be responsible/liable for any error, misstatement or omission.
24. In the event, the e-auction scheduled/ terminated/ postponed for any reason whatsoever, Phoenix has the right to sell the secured asset by any other modes under the provisions of Rule 8(5) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 and SARFAESI Act, 2002.

Sd/-
Authorised Officer
Phoenix ARC Private Limited, Phoenix Trust FY 16-23

Place : Bengaluru
Date : 19-02-2026

ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES
RISHIKESH-249203

Advt. No. 2026/06 Date: 14.02.2026

RECRUITMENT NOTICE

Online applications are invited for Group-A posts of Deputy Medical Superintendent on Direct Recruitment basis in AIIMS Rishikesh. Detailed advertisement and other conditions are available on the institute website www.aiimsrishikesh.edu.in.

Recruitment Cell, AIIMS, Rishikesh

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known (Client) is desirous of entering into a sale transaction in connection with the immovable property recently described in the 'Schedule' hereunder and is hereinafter referred to as the 'Schedule Property' with: (1) this Manohar Apartments co-op. Hsg. Soc. Ltd. Sunthwadi, Kurla, Kolhapur of Late D.R. Manjunathgowda; (2) Mr. N. Aravind Kumar, son of Late D.R. Manjunathgowda; (3) Mr. Hugar Mr. N. Aravind Kumar, son of Late D.R. Manjunathgowda; (4) Mr. Prakash D.N. son of Late D.R. Manjunathgowda, residing at Bangalore (Vendors). The Client is now desirous to buy (Title of the Owners and the joint and absolute owners of the Schedule Property, with unrestricted rights of alienation over the same.

Notice is hereby given to the general public that any persons other than the Owners, vendors, any right, title, claims, dues, demands or any interest whatsoever in respect of the Schedule Property, if any hereby called upon to submit to the undersigned, their claim, if any, over the Schedule Property or part thereof, if any, to the undersigned with documentation. The said claims or objections must be in writing, together with documentary proof of such claims or objections, so as to reach us at the address given below within a period of 15 (Fifteen) days from the date of publication of this Notice. If no such claims or objections are received within the said period of 15 (Fifteen) days, it shall be deemed that no one else other than the Owners has/have any right, title, charge, lien, claim or any interest whatsoever in respect of the Schedule Property. Further any claims or alleged liabilities, if any, which are not received within the said period of 15 (Fifteen) days shall be deemed to have been consciously waived and disregarded for all intents and purposes and shall not be binding on our Client and our Client would be at liberty to proceed with the said sale transaction in connection with the Schedule Property.

SCHEDULE
(Description of the Schedule Property)

All that piece and parcel of immovable property, being agricultural land and bearing Survey No. 128/1 Old Survey No. 128/1, measuring 1 Acres 30 Gunthas (excluding 01 Guntha of Kharab) Tarbit, situated at Mandapanahalli Village, Hosakote Hobli, Kasaba Hobli, Anekal Taluk, Bangalore Urban District and bounded on the:

East by	Property bearing Survey No. 14, 15 & 16
West by	Property bearing Survey No. 13/Ab
North by	Property bearing Survey No. 13/Ab1, 13/Ab2 and Road, and
South by	Property bearing Survey No. 11 & 17.

Date: 19.02.2026
Place: Bangalore

Mr. Brijesh Prakash
Partner
J. Sagar Associates
Advocates & Solicitors
10th Floor, SKAV 999, No. 9/1, Residency Road, Kashinath Circle
Bengaluru - 560 025.
Ph. 080 4093 3800/080 4093 3878
Email – brijesh.prakash@jsalaw.com

भेल्ला विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान
INSTITUTE OF NANO SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
Knowledge City, Sector 81, SAS Nagar, Mohali-140306, Punjab

F.No. 9/1/2026-INST Date: 19.02.2026

Advertisement for the Ph.D. Programme (August 2026 Session)

INST invites applications from prospective candidates with independent source of fellowship for admission to its Ph.D. Programme for B.S., DMS and CBU Unit in areas related to chemical sciences, physical sciences, biological sciences, pharma sciences/nanotechnology for the session beginning August 2026.

Eligibility Criteria:

Candidates must have:

1) M. Sc. with Physics, Chem., Biological Applied Sciences, Engineering or related areas. Students who have appeared for the final year/semester examinations are also eligible, provided that the degree will be granted by the time of joining.
2) Qualified in any National Examination such as CSIR-NET, GATE, JRF (NET), ICMR-JRF, DBT-JRF and INSPIRE.
3) Have a high academic record throughout.

Last date of submission of applications is 15th March, 2026. For details Candidates may visit institute Website (https://inst.ac.in/careers/4)

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1. [illegible]
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3. [illegible]

[illegible]

Director
Institute of Nano Science and Technology
Knowledge City, Sector 81, SAS Nagar, Mohali-140306, Punjab
Phone: 0172-2214001, 2214002
Email: director@inst.ac.in

THURSDAY'S AI AGENDA

PM Narendra Modi to address summit (10.25-10.38 am)

10.00-10.05 am : Dario Amodei, CEO, Anthropic

10.05-10.10 am : Sundar Pichai, CEO, Alphabet

10.10-10.15 am : Antonio Guterres, UN secretary-general

10.16-10.24 am : French President Emmanuel Macron

11.36-11.48 am : Vishal Sikka, founder, Vianai Systems

11.50 am-12.02 pm : Bill Gates, chair, Gates Foundation

12.40-12.52 pm : **Sam Altman**, CEO, OpenAI

1.39-1.51 pm : Julie Sweet, CEO, Accenture

Bits&Bytes

Centre launches VoicERA for multilingual services

The Digital India BHASHINI division under the IT ministry unveiled VoicERA, an open-source, end-to-end Voice AI stack. It creates a national execution layer for multilingual voice and language AI, enabling secure, scalable, vendor-neutral services and faster rollout of citizen-facing applications across sectors nationwide

AI in public infrastructure must stay accountable

Global leaders Wednesday said AI embedded in digital public infrastructure must stay human-centred, transparent and accountable. Representatives from Switzerland, Lithuania and the Netherlands cautioned against its misuse for surveillance or exclusion. Panelists urged safeguards at the design stage, stronger global cooperation and rights-based frameworks as AI powers public services

Tarnishing India's image Rahul's sole aim: BJP

BJP accused Rahul Gandhi of attempting to tarnish India's image at a time when country was drawing global acclaim, after he described AI Summit as a "disorganised PR spectacle". Spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said such remarks reflected poor understanding of AI

Mumbai startup wins AI Global Impact challenge

Mumbai-based startup, Infibeal Healthtech Pvt Ltd, has won the flagship 'AI For All Global Impact Challenge' at the AI Summit, emerging from over 10,000 applications. Founder Srishti Srivastava, an IIT-B alumna, said the company built HEALO, an AI-driven chatbot offering therapy-style counselling for mental health concerns

Need to maintain balance between innovation and regulation: Vaishnaw

'Social Media Curbs For Children Only After Careful Consideration'

Manash Pratim Gohain & Sidhartha

New Delhi: Union IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Wednesday underlined the need to strike a balance between development of artificial intelligence and regulation, and asserted that govt will use a mix of technical regulations and laws going forward.

"India's approach has been a techno-legal approach, a combination of using technical solutions, and legal structures. That approach is now appreciated by the global community. Some geographies have in the past used only regulation or a legal approach. That has not really delivered the kind of results which are needed," the minister told **TOI** in an interview.

Given that innovations have a long runway, heavy regulation may not be required at this stage. "This is probably the first innings of the first match of a test series," he quipped.

The minister said Big Tech "is pretty much working in sync" with society and policymakers.

Asked about restricting access of children to social media, Vaishnaw said that currently discussions are underway. "There is a discussion going on about the impact of social media on children and how it should be dealt with. Several countries have imposed restrictions and prohibitions and in India too, industry and public other stakeholders are discussing the issue. The right solution will emerge only through thoughtful deliberation."

He also said that AI offered a lot of opportunities for Indian IT companies.

"The IT industry is also very cognizant of the challenges and they are pivoting very rapidly away from the old model to create a new model of providing services, from software as a service to AI-based services. There are thousands and thousands of legacy systems in the world. Those legacy systems will have to be modernised, and our IT services companies are best placed to modernise them, using the new AI-based solutions," the minister said, adding that the govt, academia and industry are harmonised.

Asked about the PM's comments asking IT companies to diversify beyond services to products and platforms, the minister said industry is calibrating these changes. "They were trying to measure what this change would bring to their sector... Lots and lots of very focused, small models is what the IT industry is putting their emphasis on, which can be placed in an enterprise where trust is the most important factor," he said.

Vaishnaw added that the IT industry has devised a bouquet of small models, and our sovereign models are complementing that.

Photo: Tarun Rawat

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> — ASHWINI VAISHNAW, UNION IT MINISTER

Survey: Kids use AI daily, but most don't know how it works

Manash Gohain
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New Delhi: Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is fast becoming part of children's learning routines in India, but a deep misconception about what the technology actually does is spreading just as quickly. Bharat Survey for EdTech 2026, released by Central Square Foundation on Wednesday, showed 55% of children who already use edtech are using GenAI tools for learning, even as nearly three-fourths of GenAI-aware children wrongly believe these tools are simply internet search engines.

The survey, conducted between July 2025 and Jan 2026 covering 12,500 households and 2,500 teachers across 10 states, showed that for children from low-income households, GenAI adoption is no more experimental: 96% use it multiple times a week, and 69% operate it daily.

Yet, understanding lags sharply behind usage. While 65% of GenAI-aware children said they understood how it works, 72% equated it with a search application, blurring the line between probabilistic AI-generated responses and verified online information.

This gap is critical as 46% of respondents flagged "wrong information" as a key risk associated with edtech and GenAI use, alongside concerns about overuse.

The report showed that children were primarily using GenAI for school-linked activities, with 73% relying on it for doubt-solving and practice, 48% for learning new skills or language translation, and 32% for test preparation.

The main attractions are easy-to-understand explanations (45%), quick responses that save time (41%), and interactive formats (40%) — features that make GenAI especially appealing in homes where adult academic support may be limited.

However, experts warned that high-frequency use without foundational AI literacy could amplify risks.

The New Delhi-based NGO said the findings highlighted an urgent need to move beyond access and adoption metrics.

WHY GENAI APPEALS TO CHILDREN

- **45%** find easy-to-understand explanations
- **41%** quick responses, saves time
- **40%** interactive and engaging

RISKS ARE RISING TOO

- **46%** flag wrong information as a major risk
- **65%** believe GenAI amplifies existing EdTech risks

People must be careful of risks while developing technologies: AI expert

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New Delhi: Current frontier models of AI are developed by a handful of companies and in countries such as the US and China, while most other countries are "passive victims of things they built", Yoshua Bengio, professor of computer science at University of Montreal, said at the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Emphasising that only a handful of countries leading this domain is "unacceptable", Bengio, who is widely considered as an AI pioneer said nations must take this up at the highest diplomatic level. Frontier models in AI are the most advanced, large-scale, general-purpose machine learning models that currently push the boundaries of capability, multimodality (text, image, audio, video), and performance.

Yoshua said it's not just a question of morality, but also sovereignty. He added this is also related to concentration of power. "If AI capability continues to grow, there's a real possibility that there'll be a huge discrepancy, even more than there is now, between the models, let's say, in the US and China and the models that are being developed in other countries. And that could give those two countries or whoever is leading huge economic power...", noting that "...the stability, the geopolitical stability that we've known since the Second World War could just go up in flames. I'm not saying it's going to happen, but when you introduce so much power and when it is concentrated in such a way, there's a real danger that you're going to break the house."

These observations are significant at a time when India is spearheading the campaign for democratising AI.

On what India should be careful with regard to AI, Bengio said people should be mindful of the effects or the risks that are being taken that are going to affect society while developing the technologies. "We need to understand it scientifically. We need to understand it socially because there's a social component psychologically in the cases of AI because we're talking about systems that interact with people and language. So, a country like India could contribute to that understanding," he said.

He also said there is a dire need to carry out independent risk assessment before deploying open AI models. "If the risks are not too large compared to the benefits, because clearly there are benefits to sharing, in particular in developing countries like here in India, then sure, you should absolutely go open. But if you see that the risks cross a threshold of social acceptability, then you should not. So this way we might be able to get the benefits of open source when it makes sense and we could prevent catastrophic uses otherwise," Bengio said.

The professor also drew a parallel to how thorough risk assessment is carried out before allowing the sale of medicines and the same should be followed when using Artificial Intelligence in the public.

"You can't do whatever you want that's going to make you money. You need to first show to an independent jury, like representing the govt, that your product is not going to be harmful. But there's no such thing right now. It's a scandal," he said.

Tarun Rawat

Visitors explore cutting-edge AI gizmos at the summit on Wednesday

Nvidia aims to enable 500 startups over next 12 months

New Delhi: Nvidia has partnered AI Grants India (AIGI), a registered non-profit foundation, to support early-stage AI founders through its inception startup programme, with an aim to enable up to 500 new AI startups over the next 12 months, reports **Supriya Roy**.

Under the collaboration, founders building via AIGI will gain access to Nvidia's developer tools, infrastructure and ecosystem support. Nvidia is offering what AIGI described as its "full stack of resources," though the quantification of credits or computing support has not been finalised.

AIGI, co-founded by Bhaskar Rode and Vaibhav Domkundwar, defines a "startup formed" as a company registration. Domkundwar said AIGI is less than nine months into operations and the 500-startup target is aspirational but may very well be breached. Over the past few months, AIGI said it has enabled more than 1,500 builders, supported over 100 idea-stage AI startups and facilitated over one billion tokens across model platforms. The latest announcement comes alongside the India-AI Impact Summit 2026.

To be future-ready, India expands AI to be part of everyday life

New Delhi: In a move that signals a shift from individual AI use to institution-led adoption, OpenAI on Wednesday announced partnerships with six Indian universities and three major edtech platforms to expand AI education across campuses, coaching centres and regional languages, reports **Manash Gohain**.

The announcement, made during the India AI Impact Summit, aims to prepare students, teachers and early-career professionals for what OpenAI described as a future "where AI is part of everyday learning and work".

"Everybody is talking about the AI Summit. People want to understand what AI means for them. Either you're already part of it or you feel left out — and want to be part of it," said Raghav Gupta, heading OpenAI's education work in India and Asia-Pacific.

Deployment of nearly one lakh ChatGPT Edu slots — a higher-capacity, higher-privacy education version of ChatGPT — across partner institutions. These include IIM Ahmedabad, AIIMS Delhi, IIT Delhi, Manipal University, UPES and Pearl Academy. Raghav said the initial cohort was selected based on readiness and speed.

"This is a start," he said, adding many would join soon.

'Estonia using AI smartly by building trust between govts and societies'

Estonia is widely using AI in ednl and wants to collaborate with India. In an interview with **TOI's Surojit Gupta**, *Estonia's President* **Alar Karis** *talks about how they've built trust while rolling out citizen-centric e-services. Excerpts:*

What can Estonia offer to the world and India in terms of AI and tech?

■ We can provide to India and the rest of the world our experience and how we digitalised our society. One important thing we should share with the rest of our world is how we are building trust when we go for digitisation or using AI. You should build trust not only between technologies, but also between govts and societies as a whole.

AI is still developing so fast. We don't know what's going on, let's say in three months or even two weeks.

But we are prepared and we try to use this new technology smartly. This is what we can tell India. India is also a digitalised country, so we learn from each other.

Could you give us a sense of the digitalisation that has happened in Estonia?

■ In Estonia, everything is online. That means you can even get married online. I mentioned tax, I mentioned prescriptions, basically everything. One startup, instead of using lawyers, is using AI. It doesn't mean we don't need lawyers anymore, but we can focus on things which are more important in society rather than going to Estonia to get to the court.

How are you ensuring privacy of data?

■ Privacy is getting more and more important with AI technology. Data may belong to citizens, but data privacy, especially medical care, is a concern. We see in Europe, in some countries, how difficult it is to introduce ID cards as people are concerned about the data.

What has been the increase in productivity as a result of digitalisation?

■ Someone has calculated that it has raised GDP by 5%. That is a calculation that's just done by officials. It makes your life very comfortable. In some countries, it's very difficult to fill up the tax forms. For us, it's pre-filled. It takes maybe a couple of minutes if you don't have anything to add. It makes the whole thing transparent. For medical prescriptions, you don't have to go to a doctor. He knows what your illnesses are and they give you a prescription, you see it right away and you go to a pharmacy.

What are the areas of cooperation you see with India?

■ Like India, Estonia values education. We can collaborate on this. We started AI Leap. We provided computer access to schools 30 years ago. Now, we are doing the same with AI. We teach teachers and students how to use AI smartly. We've collaboration with OpenAI and Google and asked them to provide a platform that suits students' needs in Estonia. AI Leap is in every school and we are learning how to use it and how to actually change the whole system of how we teach students.

What are your views on regulation of AI?

■ Regulations are needed. We try to ensure there are worldwide regulations, at least on a certain level. But every country is different. There are limits with technology and there are rules and regulations.

TOI INTERVIEW

'Switzerland actively contributing to development of technical standards'

Swiss President **Guy Parmelin** *backs a governance framework for AI that does not rely on a single instrument and calls for societal norms that guide users. Excerpts from an interview with* **TOI's Sidhartha**:

How should countries deal with AI regulation? Is there a need to have a new agency? Will a regulatory set-up stifle innovation and development of AI and how do you deal with challenges such as deep fake?

■ Over the past 200 years, mankind has established thousands of legal, technical and societal norms to "regulate" the development and use of engines in a vast number of different machines and vehicles, with different levels of harmonisation, based on the specific context of use. Like engines, we think AI also cannot be "regulated" by a single instrument, but we will need to develop a governance framework consisting of many instruments to cover different aspects of the development and use of AI. Switzerland is actively contributing to the development of technical standards for AI, of binding and non-binding legal instruments, like the recommendations of Unesco or Global Partnership on AI and Council of Europe framework convention on AI, which has been elaborated among 16 countries from all around the world and is the first binding international treaty on AI. But we also need societal and cultural norms that guide us when using AI in our specific contexts.

Switzerland is chairing the OSCE for the third time this year. In that capacity, what are you proposing to do to end the Russia-Ukraine war? Also, what do you make of India's efforts to reach out to both sides for ceasefire and return to dialogue?

■ Under the first principle of the OSCE chairpersonship ('Helsinki Principles — for lasting peace'), Switzerland is committed to a just peace in Ukraine. In his capacity as OSCE chairman in office, federal councillor Ignazio Cassis visited Kyiv (Feb 2) and Moscow (Feb 5-6) along with the OSCE secretary general to offer dialogue and to make sure all relevant actors know what the OSCE could contribute in the context of a negotiated settlement. Ultimately, it is up to the states to decide whether to make use of it.

Last one year has been turbulent for trade. How much cushion have deals such as those with India provided?

■ FTAs such as the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement are a key tool, especially in challenging times for trade policy. They enable the Swiss export industry to tap into new markets and diversify.

Given unilateral tariff actions over the last 10 months, what is the way forward as WTO's powers are completely undermined and there is a raft of bilateral trade agreements?

■ WTO has long been under severe stress, but despite institutional paralysis, around 74% of global trade still takes place on MFN terms. It remains the only institution that monitors members' trade measures and offers a forum for dialogue among 166 economies. Switzerland will continue to champion multilateralism and support WTO reforms to preserve rules-based trade.

India working closely with European nations to expand AI-led growth: Official

▸ Continued from P1

While Germany is Europe's leading semiconductor hub, the sources said Estonia, too, is a global leader in artificial intelligence, ranking sixth worldwide for AI startups. "India is working closely with several European countries to learn from one another and expand AI-led growth and development," said an official.

Modi and Finland Prime Minister Petteri Orpo called for doubling bilateral trade and greater technology collaboration, including in co-development of quantum and 6G, renewables, circular economy and defence, as they agreed that India-EU FTA will serve as a catalyst for shared progress and prosperity. In his meeting with Modi, Croatian PM Andrej Plenkovic, too, called for early implementation of India-FTA to boost bilateral trade.

"In recent diplomatic engagements, Europe has expressed an unambiguous vote of confidence in the vitality of India-Europe Strategic Partnership, anchored in AI, digital innovation, strategic cooperation, economic growth and shared global priorities," said an official.

PM has packed Wednesday, holds 9 bilaterals

With world leaders in the capital for the AI Impact Summit, PM Modi had a packed day as he held nine bilateral meetings Wednesday. Seven of these meetings were with heads of state, including of Spain, Finland, Serbia, Croatia, Estonia, Kazakhstan and Bhutan. He also had separate meetings with CEO of Google and Sun Microsystems co-founder. He will welcome world leaders at Bharat Mandapam, the summit's venue, on Thursday and deliver his address, officials said. TNN

CHANGING FACE OF AI

Tarun Rawat

FUTURE FRONT: Visitors at India AI Impact Summit 2026 being held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, on Wednesday

India's talent pipeline ecosystem already thriving, says Google CEO

▸ Continued from P1

Google is among the world's largest private investors in subsea fibre-optic cable networks. The new link connects India and the US with the Southern Hemisphere. Partnering with specialist companies, it typically finances, designs and initiates these projects, which span thousands of kilometres under the sea and carry high-capacity global data traffic.

The strategy reflects Google's view that India is uniquely positioned in the AI era. Pichai said he sees "a chance to play a big role in all three" — as a user, builder and rule-shaper of AI systems.

He described India as a "full stack" AI opportunity. That means investing in research institutions, infrastructure and diffusion across sectors so that AI touches daily life. "The progress is about diffusing the technology," he said, adding that it must reach farmers, students and doctors.

In this context, diffusion means how widely and deeply Artificial Intelligence spreads across the economy and society, beyond labs, pilot projects and large corporations.

The company also announced a $30-million effort from its philanthropic arm, Google.org, to improve public services with AI, along with another $30 million to support researchers using AI for scientific breakthroughs.

On corporate hesitation around AI spending, Pichai drew a historical parallel. Investments today, he said, resemble railroad and national highway projects, capital intensive but transformative. "We are investing to meet that moment," he said. Cloud backlog alone doubled year-on-year to $240 billion, underscoring technological demand.

For India's talent pipeline, Google's CEO was clear. The ecosystem is already thriving. "I just don't see any impediments," he added.

Courts must reflect compassion, humanity and understanding: SC

Judicial Aim Of Satisfying Justice Needs Constitutional Fidelity And Empathy

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SC seeks expert help to frame norms, review past sensitisation efforts

New Delhi: Supreme Court has said that for a fair and effective justice system, it is essential for judges and courts to show compassion, humanity and understanding at every step of adjudication process — from hearing citizens' grievances to delivering verdicts, especially in cases relating to sexual offences against women.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and N V Anjaria said on Tuesday that the judicial system's objective to deliver justice to citizens' satisfaction can be achieved by sticking to constitutional and legal principles and simultaneously fostering an environment of compassion and empathy.

Writing the judgment, CJI Kant said, "No judge or judgement of *any* court can be expected to do complete justice when it is inconsiderate towards the factual realities of a litigant and the vulnerabilities which they may be facing in approaching a court of law."

He added, "Our decisions as participants in the legal process, from laying down the procedure that shall have to be faced by common citizens to the final judgment passed in any given case, must reflect the ethos of compassion, humanity and understanding, which are essential for creating a fair and effective justice system".

A change in approach, attitude and understanding of judges and courts towards this end would require formulation of guidelines with the help of domain experts, who would study past endeavours by judiciary and statutory bodies to sensitise judges and give a report, SC said.

For this purpose, SC appointed National Judicial Academy director and former SC judge Aniruddha Bose as the chairperson of the committee and gave him a free hand to choose its members from among legal practitioners, academicians and social workers.

"We request the Committee of Experts to prepare a comprehensive report on the matter of 'Developing Guidelines to Inculcate Sensitivity and Compassion into Judges and Judicial Processes in the Context of Sexual Offences and other Vulnerable Cases'," SC said.

The committee's recommendations "shall be in the form of 'Draft Guidelines for the Approach of Judges and the Judicial System When Dealing with Cases of Sexual Offences and other Similarly Sensitive Occurrences Involving Vulnerable Victims, Complainants, and/or Witnesses'."

The CJI said, "The Committee shall, while preparing the report, bear in mind the linguistic diversity of our nation. There are various examples of offensive words and expressions, the use of which would ordinarily constitute an offence under our penal laws, but they are openly spoken by members of our society in local dialects, ostensibly because of the absence of a clear understanding of their offensive nature."

He further said, "It shall be highly appreciated if the Committee, as a part of its report, is able to identify and compile such words/expressions, from different languages, so that they do not go unnoticed, and the complainants/victims are empowered to give a better and fuller narrative of the trauma undergone by them."

SC stays exhumation of tribal Christians' remains

Times News Network

New Delhi: Supreme Court on Wednesday put an interim stay on the exhumation of bodies of tribal Christians in certain Chhattisgarh villages for their relocation to the religious community's designated graveyards, as an NGO said this act violates the fundamental rights of local Christians to be buried in their villages. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta agreed to hear a petition by the NGO — Chhattisgarh Association for Justice and Equality — after senior advocate Colin Gonsalves cited SC's split verdict on a plea seeking burial of a pastor's body in his village or his agricultural field.

While one judge had permitted the petitioner to bury his father's body in his private land, the other judge had said no citizen had an unqualified right to choose the place of burial. After the split decision in Jan last year, the bench had directed burial of the body at a designated burial ground 25-30 km from the village in Chhattisgarh.

After hearing Gonsalves, Justices Nath and Mehta sought response from the Chhattisgarh govt to the PIL and ordered that no further exhumation of bodies would be permitted. Gonsalves accused the state govt of misusing the split verdict to stop burial of tribal Christians at places within a village's precincts. He said the court must intervene to direct that irrespective of religion, caste or status, every dead person has a right to burial at demarcated places in his/her village.

The petitioner said the authorities should be directed to demarcate such land for burial in those villages which do not have designated burial grounds. Interestingly, the bench of Justices Nath and Mehta on Monday had refused to entertain a petition challenging the Oct 28, 2025, order of the Chhattisgarh HC asking petitioners to approach statutory authority on their grievances against gram sabhas which have put up hoardings barring entry of Christian priests purportedly to prevent conversion through allurement.

Robot quite naughty, says staffer of Galgotias

▶ Continued from page 1

The action taken, Krishnan added, is also to ensure that "such exhibits don't overshadow other genuine and excellent works showcased in the exhibition".

Govt sources said the robotic dog, presented by the university as "Orion", was identified as the Unitree Go2 — a commercially available quadruped robot made by Chinese robotics firm Unitree, priced in India around Rs 2-3 lakh. As scrutiny intensified, the university was asked to vacate its stall at the expo.

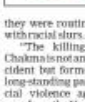
The controversy was triggered after a faculty member, Neha Singh of the university, told DD News, "We are the first private university investing more than Rs 350 crore in artificial intelligence... So, Orion has been developed by the Centers of Excellence and as you can see, it can take all shapes and sizes." She added that the robot was "quite naughty" and could perform surveillance and monitoring tasks.

As criticism mounted online, Galgotias issued a series of statements that appeared to walk back the claims. In its first clarification, the university said it had not built the robodog and stressed student learning through exposure to global technologies. In a later post, it alleged a "propaganda campaign" against the institution.

Singh later said the row stemmed from unclear communication, adding, "We cannot claim that we manufactured it." In its final statement, the university apologised "profusely for the confusion", blamed an "ill-informed" representative for giving "factually incorrect information", denied any institutional intent to misrepresent the innovation, and said it had vacated the premises in line with the organisers' sentiments.

Supreme Court: Deal firmly with attacks over race, language, region

Times News Network



A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi said this while expressing reluctance to enter the legislative domain

New Delhi: On a petition highlighting an allegedly racially motivated attack last Dec that led to the death of Anjel Chakma in Uttarakhand, Supreme Court on Wednesday said those who attack people for their appearance, language, race or place of origin must be dealt with an iron hand.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi said this while expressing reluctance to enter the legislative domain and lay down a robust mechanism under penal law for prevention of group violence against people on such grounds.

Petitioner Anoop Prakash Awasthi highlighted the repeated instances of violence against people from north-eastern states in many parts of the country, allegedly only because of their physical features and said they were routinely abused with racial slurs.

"The killing of Anjel Chakma is not an isolated incident but forms part of a long-standing pattern of racial violence against citizens from the North-Eastern States, including the death of Nido Tanium in 2014 and numerous assaults on students and workers in metropolitan cities, a phenomenon formally acknowledged by govt in parliamentary replies yet left unaddressed through any dedicated legislative or institutional framework," he said.

The CJI-led bench said that the strong federal character of India, founded on unity of citizens despite cultural, linguistic and regional diversity cannot be allowed to be undermined by such abominable crimes.

However, on the petitioner's plea that the court formulate guidelines along the lines of Vishaka judgment (to prevent sexual harassment of women at workplace) to stop violence against people based on race, region and language till Parliament enacts a law, the bench said that would be better dealt with by govt.

SC asked Awasthi to give a copy of the petition to attorney general (AG) R Venkataramani and requested AG to take up the issue with the authorities concerned in Union govt.

RSS: British distorted our edu system

Lucknow: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Wednesday said the British "tampered" with India's traditional education system and replaced it with their own framework to serve colonial interests and that this must be corrected to make India Vishwaguru.

Addressing research scholars at Lucknow University, Bhagwat said the British created a class of "black Englishmen" clerks who would serve their administrative needs.

He said education and healthcare are fundamental necessities and should not be treated as commercial enterprises. "Education and health must be accessible to all," he said. Bhagwat claimed there has been negative propaganda against the RSS and urged researchers to present facts objectively. He said RSS is committed to building a prosperous and united nation and works for social cohesion rather than popularity or political power. TNN

Whistleblowers can testify, not litigate, says HC

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Chandigarh: Punjab and Haryana HC has said mere harm, annoyance or sentimental grievance, termed 'damnum sine injuria (damage without legal injury)', did not confer the status of an "aggrieved person" in litigation.

According to HC, a third party, including a complainant or whistleblower, has no locus standi to canvass the correctness of service actions. Such a person may, at best, lead evidence as a witness but cannot assume the status of an adversarial litigant.

"To be considered aggrieved, an individual must demonstrate that they are deprived of a legal right or that their legally protected interest is adversely affected or jeopardised," Justice Harpreet Singh Brar said in a recent order while allowing three petitions filed by Sufer Singh and another petitioner against Haryana govt and others in connection with a dispute over Shahbad Cooperative Sugar Mill in Kurukshetra district.

Justice Brar said a stranger to the litigation, one who has no proprietary or particular interest in the subject of dispute, was "strictly prohibited from meddling in judicial proceedings".

The dispute arose after the mill chairman passed an order on May 31, 2025, nullifying verbal orders of the MD that exonerated the petitioners over alleged procurement irregularities.

The petitioners contended the chairman had no statutory authority under Haryana Cooperative Societies Act or service rules governing the mill employees to overturn the MD's disciplinary decisions. They further argued the impugned order was passed without issuing any show-cause notice, supplying the material relied upon, and affording them a hearing.

After hearing, HC said even if the chairman intended to disagree with prior findings, the principles of natural justice required that the affected employees were given a hearing.

Global South must lead in climate solutions: Hillary

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Mumbai: India and other countries of the Global South are on the front lines of climate change and must lead the world in developing solutions, former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said at Mumbai Climate Week on Wednesday while criticising US President Donald Trump for denying climate science.

The US under Trump has withdrawn from the Paris Agreement on climate and rolled back dozens of environmental regulations, including limits on power plant emissions.

"We have a (US) president who denies climate change... denies facts," Clinton said on Wednesday, adding, "We cannot wait for political change that I know will come to United States because that is a few years off, we have to do the innovation and build the models here." "I have confidence in India as an innovator," she said at the Jio Convention Centre in Mumbai. Clinton, who is in India for her foundation, the Clinton Global Initiative, suggested that the three-day forum could be part of efforts to shift the focus of climate solutions to the global south.

Note was not a signed affidavit: Bombay HC

▶ Continued from page 1

Senior counsel Amit Desai for Mallya tendered the written statement submitted by his solicitors, Karpa and Company, before chief justice Shree Chandrashekhar and justice Gautam Ankhad. The bench remarked that the note was not a signed affidavit.

The Union home ministry, in a fresh affidavit on Tuesday, however, said **Mallya**'s affidavit dated Feb 11 was not in conformity with the HC's Dec order, which asked him when he would return to India. The affidavit, affirmed in London, says he made bona fide offers of settlement and that the Union finance ministry's disclosure in Lok Sabha last Dec of Rs 15,008 crore recovered by banks against Kingfisher Airlines' borrowings made the recovery in excess of the Rs 6,200 crore debt recorded by the Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT) in 2017.

Mallya's petition challenging the constitutionality of certain provisions of the FEO Act can be heard even when he is not in India, said the statement of Feb 11, citing a Nov 2023 top court order permitting those declared to be FEOs and absconders to be represented by lawyers in India while they remained physically outside the country. The special Act's Section 11 also permits legal representation when notice is issued to a person.

Mallya's lawyers also said his pleas — one challenging the special trial court order dubbing him an FEO and the other challenging the FEO provisions — need to be heard separately. The statement repeated that the FEO Act of 2018 is for recovery of banks' dues, which is "more than adequately met in the present case".

The Centre, represented by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, ASG Anil Singh, accompanied by counsel for the Enforcement Directorate, Prashant Mishra, said Mallya is absconding since March 2, 2016, and was declared a "fugitive offender" by the special court in Jan 2018, following which extradition proceedings stood initiated and are at an advanced stage in the UK. Mehta said once he is extradited, or if Mallya chooses to return, he will be strictly dealt with under Indian laws and the Constitution, and he must thus submit himself to the legal process in India, failing which the law would take its course.

The HC, which at one point was inclined to dismiss Mallya's petition, did not do so after Desai pleaded and persuaded it not to, and contended that Mallya's assets are already seized and that, even in England, he is not allowed to leave the country or hold a passport.

The HC then directed Mallya to file a fresh affidavit reiterating the written statement, as well as comprehensively showcasing such orders passed by courts in England. The ED is to file its affidavit in rejoinder thereafter.

Top court talks tough on eco offenders

▶ Continued from page 1

Supreme Court judge Sanjay Kumar wrote the judgment in the financial fraud case that raises the threshhold for economic offenders to get bail by putting them on a par with those charged with heinous crimes.

"In offences of a pecuniary nature, where innocent people are cheated of their hard-earned money by conmen, who make it their life's pursuit to exploit and feast upon the gullibility of others, the aforestated factors must necessarily be weighed while dealing with the alleged offenders' plea for grant of bail," he said. Referring to the accused person's activities of forging names and identity cards, and his intention to dupe and cheat people as well as indulging in similar activities after getting bail, the bench said, this demonstrates that he is a career criminal and a menace to society.

In Andhra and Telangana alone, suppression of sales reached ₹5,141 cr

▶ Continued from page 1

In Andhra Pradesh and Telangana alone suppression of sales reached Rs 5,141 crore. Detailed physical and digital inquiries in a sample of 40 restaurants in Andhra and Telangana detected suppression of about Rs 400 crore. The top five states where evasion was detected were Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Karnataka logged the highest instances of deletion at roughly Rs 2,000 crore, followed by Telangana (Rs 1,500 crore) and Tamil Nadu (Rs 1,200 crore). Officials said some restaurants did not even bother to delete their records even as they underreported sales in their income-tax returns. Based on a sample estimate, officials have concluded that 27% of total sales were suppressed. Working from data accessed at the billing software provider company's centre in Ahmedabad, officials analysed transactions at the department's digital forensic and analytics lab in Ayakar Bhavan, Hyderabad.

WHAT'S COOKING?

Investigators said restaurants typically enter all sales — card, UPI, and cash — into the software to prevent internal manipulation by servers, cashiers, and managers.

Documents accessed by TOI revealed that one pattern flagged was the selective deletion of cash invoices, where restaurants allegedly retained only a portion of cash entries and deleted the rest to reduce income-tax and GST exposure.

Another pattern was bulk deletion, wiping bills clean for a chosen date range, including up to 30 days of billing, followed by filing returns that reflected only a fraction of actual sales. Across six financial years, from 2019-20 to 2025-26, the dataset covered billing of about Rs 2.4 lakh crore.

The probe used high-capacity systems, while AI tools, including Generative AI, were used to quickly map GST numbers to restaurants using open-source information and publicly available online material. Initially, searches were conducted in Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, and other towns in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, which revealed that the software was being used for suppressing sales. The Central Board of Direct Taxes then decided to expand the probe to the rest of India.

ಕೃಷ್ಣಾ ಕಾಲೋನಿ ಸೇರ್ಪಡೆ ಗೆ ಸೂಚನೆ

Rajasthan Medical Services Corporation Limited, Jaipur
D-Block, Swasthya Bhawan, C-Scheme, Jaipur - 302005
Ph. No. 0141-2228087, Fax No. 0141-2228085 E-Mail - edsupmsrvc-rj@nic.in
No. F-3 (1)RMSCEPM/M-49/B-833/2025-2026 Date : 12.02.2026

Corrigendum / Addendum
Corrigendum / Addendum: Bid No. (NIB-933) for Item DEEP FREEZER for revised technical specifications has been issued. Corrigendum / Addendum details may be visited on Procurement portal website "https://sarthi.rajasthan.gov.in" or "www.dipromine.org" or "https://www.rajasthan.gov.in" or website "http://www.rmscl.rajasthan.gov.in"
URN: (MSC25293L0N30016)
Executive Director (EPM)

JAIPUR VIDYUT VITRAN NIGAM LIMITED
Office Of The Superintending Engineer (TW)
Old Power House Premises, Near Ram Mandir Bus Stand, Jaipur-302006
Website: http://energy.rajasthan.gov.in/jvvnl, Email: sewtwjvvnl@gmail.com
E- TENDER NOTICE
Online bids are hereby invited in two parts (Techno-commercial bid and Price bid) from eligible bidders for the work of Execution of deposit works, including the Supply, Erection, Installation, Testing, and Commissioning of material/equipment for the construction of 33/11 KV sub-stations, 33 KV & 11 KV overhead Line, laying of 33 KV and 11 KV underground XLPE Cable, construction of 33 KV Bay, 11 KV Bay and shifting of 33 KV & 11 KV line, Metering under Barran circle on turnkey basis against TW/TN-025 Lot-6. Participating bidders can download complete set of bidding documents from e-procurement portal (http://www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in). Last Date/Time for receipt of online bids through e-procurement portal is 05.03.2026 up to 05:00 PM. For further details regarding Works, Tender Notifications & Specifications please visit website http://www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in, http://www.sppp.rajasthan.gov.in & http://energy.rajasthan.gov.in/jvvnl JVVN-TW(N)23/2026(NIB)
SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (TW)
For Electricity Complaints Toll Free No. 1800 180 6007

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
MINOR IRRIGATION & GROUND WATER DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
MINOR IRRIGATION & GROUND WATER DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT DIVISION, BELAGAVI.
PH NO.0831-2463950 / FAX NO.0831-2423038
No. EE/MI&GWDD/KGK/TNDR/AE/2025-26/5278 Date: 17-02-2026
TIME EXTENSION TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION (KW-4)
Corrigendum is issued as given below for Short term tender called by Executive Engineer, MI & GWDD Division, Belagavi. Vide ref No.EE/MI&GWDDD/BGM/TND/AE/2025-26/5278 Dated:16-01-2026 for following works due to Technical Reason for the 1 works.
1 Tender Receipt on or before 24-02-2025 upto 15.00 hrs.
2 Technical Bid will be opened on 25-02-2026 (If possible)
All other conditions of the tender remain unchanged.
Sd/-Executive Engineer,
M.I & GWDD Division, Belagavi.

7 die in Bihar village after 'tilak' function
Alok Chamaria | TNN
Sasaram: Authorities have launched a probe following reports of at least seven deaths among attendees of a wedding function on Feb 14 in a village in Bihar's Rohtas district. A team from the excise department have reached Mathiya under Bikramganj subdivision, to conduct an inquiry.
According to sources, a "tilak" ceremony was organised at the residence of Poojan Singh for his son on Feb 14. A day after the function, another son of Poojan, Lallu Singh, fell ill and died suddenly on Feb 16, triggering concern among villagers.
Speculation soon spread in the village linking the deaths to alleged consumption of liquor. Four relatives of Poojan, who had attended the ceremony, also died within three days.
An official Tariq Mahmood said officials have spoken with family members and preliminary information suggests that one of the deaths may have been due to a dog bite. Unverified reports suggest two cooks, who had attended the ceremony, died after returning home, though there was no official confirmation.

With 139 deaths, Bengal in lightning danger zone

Surge Due To Warming Climate

Krishnendu.Bandyopadhyay
@timesofindia.com

Across the country, lightning accounts for more than 35% of all natural hazard-related deaths

Kolkata: Climate change-induced lightning strikes have been claiming lives at an alarming rate in Bengal. With more than 139 deaths reported in 2025 and 1,469 fatalities recorded between 2018 and 2023, multiple studies confirmed Bengal as part of one of India's biggest lightning hotspots.
On Wednesday, disaster management and civil defence minister, Javed Ahmed Khan, voiced deep concern over the growing toll and called for a sharper, more targeted strategy to prevent lightning-related deaths.
Speaking at a Unicef workshop on climate-induced disaster risk reduction, Khan said while improved forecasting, evacuation protocols, and a network of multi-purpose cyclone shelters significantly reduced casualties from storms and floods, lightning fatalities remain "stubbornly high". "Early lightning alerts are still not reaching people in the fields, on the roads, or in rivers in time to prevent fatalities," the minister said. "We built a large number of multi-purpose disaster shelters. We developed a near-perfect SOP for evacuation and moving people to shelters in the face of looming disasters. We now have to find our way out in preventing lightning deaths," he said.
Scientists attribute the surge in lightning incidents to a warming climate.
Habibur Rahaman Biswas, IMD scientist, explained that rising global and surface temperatures, coupled with warming water bodies, have been destabilizing the atmosphere. "This instability leads to the formation of more intense thunderstorms and frequent lightning activity," he said.
Experts underscored that while infrastructure and forecasting improved, last-mile communication, community awareness, and behavioural change remain critical in reducing lightning fatalities in a warming world.
Officials noted that climate change is reshaping Bengal's risk profile. "Several disasters that were earlier rare or short-lived in Bengal — such as prolonged heatwaves, intense hailstorms, and extreme rainfall events — are now becoming more frequent," an official said.
Rajesh Sinha, DM & CD principal secretary described Bengal as a "microcosm of India" in terms of disaster exposure. "Bengal faces almost every type of disaster that the country does. This means our mitigation model can serve as a national template — it only needs to be scaled up," he said.
Asish Sinha, DG of Indian Coast Guard, underscored another environmental concern — frequent oil spills in the Bay of Bengal caused by unseaworthy barges.

Social Welfare Department
Office of the Commissioner, 5th Floor, M. S. Building, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Veedhi, Bngaluru - 560 001
No.:SWD/2025-26/SE0238 Date:18.02.2026
TENDER NOTIFICATION
E-tenders are invited through e-portal for providing services of external resource personnel for office of the Commissioner and its affiliated offices. Interested tenderers should submit their e-tender applications through https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in before 17.03.2026, 5.30 P.M. E.M.D.: Rs. 11,25,000/- should be submitted through e-portal.
Further details can be obtained by the office of the undersigned during office hours.
Sd/-
Deputy Director (Admin.)
and Tender Inviting Officer
DIPR/CP/UA/5736/2025-26

Government of Karnataka
TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT
Office of the Commissioner for Transport & Road Safety, 1st Floor, 'A' Block, TTMC Building, Shantinagar, Bengaluru-560027. Ph: 080-22214900, email:tcadmn-tran-ka@nic.in
No.CT/EST-06/PR-203/2025-26 Dated:18.02.2026
TENDER NOTIFICATION
Bids are invited by Transport Department from the eligible IDD Empanelled firms To provide Transaction Advisory Services, All bid documents shall be submitted through Online in e-Procurement platform only. For more details please log on to e-procurement website: kppp.karnataka.gov.in They may take assistance from e-procurement help desk at +91-8046010000/+91-8068948777. Last date for submission of Bids is:17.03.2026 upto 4.00 P.M. For clarifications please Contact 080-22235176
Tender No: TD/2025-26/SE0117
Sd/-
For Commissioner for Transport
Bengaluru
DIPR/CP/5715/CCL/2025-26

ANDHRA PRADESH TECHNOLOGY SERVICES LIMITED
3rd Floor, R & B Building, Opp. Indira Gandhi Municipal Stadium, RG Road, Labbipet, Vijayawada - 520 010, Andhra Pradesh, India
APTS Ref. No.: ITCS1-15927/3/2026-PROC-APTS, Dt. 18-02-2026
Request for Proposal (RFP) for Selection of Skill Training Partner for Imparting training to APBOCWW Board Registered Workers and their Dependents.
For full details regarding detailed Tender Notification, specifications and digital certificate please visit https://www.apts.gov.in and www.apeprocurement.gov.in.
Sd/- Managing Director, A.P. Technology Services Ltd.,

Nagpur engr stuck in Mali jail as employer fails to pay bail bond
Vaibhav.Ganjapure
@timesofindia.com
Nagpur: A 43-year-old engineer from Nagpur arrested in Mali on Feb 15 last year over a financial dispute between his Delhi-based employer and its West African partner languishes in jail there despite securing bail five months ago as his employer, Aar Ess Exim Pvt Ltd (AEEPL), has failed to pay the bail amount.
Nitin Gulhane, a project manager with AEEPL, was arrested in Bamako four days after returning to Mali to resume work. He had taken a work break as the project was halted due to rain.
Nitin's wife, Priyanka Gulhane, and his brother-in-law Gaurav Choudhari said the arrest stemmed from a financial dispute between AEEPL and Kwepieba Mali over the validity of bank guarantees linked to hydropower and rural electrification projects.
Nitin oversaw electrification of 22 villages in Djenne in Central Mali on behalf of AEEPL. Priyanka said tendering for the project was done much before he took the Mali assignment in Nov 2022. "My husband was neither involved nor had the decision-making authority in financial matters. His role was limited to execution of the project," she said.
He was taken into custody along with AEEPL director Rajesh Ramachandran. On Aug 15, 2025, Nitin was granted bail on a bond of Rs 3.25 crore, but Ramachandran's was denied any relief.
Nitin's family raised the matter with external affairs ministry. In Sept, officials in MEAs met AEEPL managing director Rajendra Mishra. "Since that meeting, Mishra has been paying the deadline set by the ministry and giving excuses for not arranging the bail amount," Priyanka said.

Social Welfare Department
Office of the Commissioner, 5th Floor, M. S. Building, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Veedhi, Bngaluru - 560 001
No.:SWD/2025-26/IND0383 Date:18.02.2026
TENDER NOTIFICATION
E-tenders are invited through e-portal on 18.02.2026 for the purchase of Stationery and Other Items for the use of the office of Social Welfare Commissioner. Interested tenderers should submit their e-tender applications through https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in before 17.03.2026, 5.30 P.M. E.M.D.: Rs. 1,95,000/- should be submitted through e-portal.
Further details can be obtained by the office of the undersigned during office hours.
Sd/-
Deputy Director (Admin.)
and Tender Inviting Officer
DIPR/CP/UA/5735/2025-26

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY & VETERINARY SERVICES,
Office of the Commissioner, Pashupalana Bhavana, 1st Floor, Opp. to CSI Office, Bellary Road, Hebbal, Bengaluru - 560 024.
Email : commissionerahvs@gmail.com Ph: 080-23412767
No: CAH/VHS/CR-40/D.C&FS/TENDER/2025-26 Date: 18.02.2026
SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION
(KPP portal mode only)
The Commissioner of Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services, Government of Karnataka, Bangalore hereby invites bids through KPP -portal from eligible bidders FOR THE SUPPLY OF DRUGS, CHEMICALS AND FEED SUPPLIMENTS FOR THE YEAR 2025-26 for which the tendered Amount is Rs. 236.56 lakhs. Complete tender documents can be viewed by visiting website https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in from Dtd: 18.02.2026 and tenderers can upload all the necessary documents through KPP portal from 18.02.2026 to 05.03.2026 till 17.30 hours.
Further information can be obtained from KPP Portal and this office during office hours.
Sd/- Deputy Director, Veterinary Medical Stores
Department Of Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services,
DIPR/CP/5716/WV/2025-26

KARNATAKA STATE HIGHER EDUCATION COUNCIL
No. 30, Prasannaiumar Block, Y Ramachandra Road Gandhinagara, Bengaluru - 560009. Ph : 080-22341395
Website : www.kshec.karnataka.gov.in
File No. KSHEC/ACMT/3/2025-AGGU/MTS-KSHEC Date: 18.02.2026
EXTENDED NOTIFICATION
Re-tender has been invited by Karnataka State Higher Education Council in double-cover system through e-procurement portal for Supply, Installation and Maintenance of Paperless Conference Hall under RUSA. For more details contact e-procurement website : http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.
Sd/-
Executive Director, Karnataka State Higher Education Council, Bengaluru

RAIL WHEEL FACTORY
(Ministry of Railways)
(General Manager's Office, Personnel Department, Yelahanka, Bangalore - 560064)
NOTIFICATION NO.RWF/NE-10/1/99 (2) DATED 18.02.2026
RECRUITMENT OF SPORTS PERSON IN THE GAME OF HOCKEY (MEN) TO THE POST IN LEVEL-2 OF RS(RP) RULES, 2016 IN RAIL WHEEL FACTORY FOR THE YEAR 2025-26.
Rail Wheel Factory, Yelahanka, Bangalore-560064, invites applications in the prescribed format from eligible sportspersons for One (01) post to be recruited in Level-2 (GP 1900) of the pay matrix of VII CPC against Sports Quota (Open Advertisement) for the year 2025-26.
AGE: 18-25 years as on 01.01.2026.
The details of Sports/Discipline/Game/Event & distribution of post for above recruitment notified are as under:

Name of the Sports Discipline/Game	Event/ Position	No. of post in pay Level-2	No. of Sportsperson
Hockey (Men)	Goal Keeper	01	01
Total		01	01

For detailed Notification including minimum Sports norms required and Application Form, visit RWF website www.rwf.indianrailways.gov.in
Last date for receipt of application is 03.03.2026 for all the candidates except for those candidates residing at far flung areas (as indicated in the Notification) for which the last date of receipt is 10.03.2026.
Sd/-
PRINCIPAL CHIEF PERSONNEL OFFICER

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY & VETERINARY SERVICES,
Office of the Commissioner, Pashupalana Bhavana, 1st Floor, Opp. to CSI Office, Bellary Road, Hebbal, Bengaluru - 560 024.
Email : commissionerahvs@gmail.com Ph: 080-23412767
No: CAH/VHS/CR-39/MINISTRAM/TENDER/2025-26 Date: 18.02.2026
TENDER NOTIFICATION
(KPP portal mode only)
The Commissioner of Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services, Government of Karnataka, Bangalore hereby invites bids through KPP-portal from eligible bidders FOR SUPPLY OF MINISTRAWS TO SEMEN PRODUCTION CENTRES FOR THE YEAR 2025-26 for which the tendered Amount is Rs. 183.16 lakhs. Complete tender documents can be viewed by visiting website https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in from Dtd: 18.02.2026 and tenderers can upload all the necessary documents through KPP portal from 18.02.2026 to 17.03.2026 till 17.30 hours.
Further information can be obtained from KPP Portal and this office during office hours.
Sd/- Deputy Director, Veterinary Medical Stores
Department Of Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services,
DIPR/CP/5718/WV/2025-26

GMR
(Hyderabad International Airport Limited)
Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Hyderabad
Opp. Terminal 2 Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi - 110 037
CIN NO. U63033DL2006PLC150042
NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)
Delhi International Airport Ltd. (DIAL) invites tenders/bids for
"Appointment of Training Institute for undertaking Technical Trainings".
For details, the interested parties may download the Bid Documents from www.gmrdelhiairport.in
between 10.02.26 to 26.02.26 (5 PM). The last date for submission of the Bids is 05.03.26.

KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
No.2, 2/1 and 2/3, Kalidasa Marg, 1st Main Road, Gandhinagar
Bengaluru - 560 009. Phone No. 080-22265383, website: www.kiadb.in
IADB/ENGG/ETND-EP-84/2088/2025-26 Date: 18.02.2026
SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING TENDER
(Through GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Only)
Item rate Tender under two cover system are invited as per the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act 1999 and Rules 2000 through electronic procurement from eligible Contractors (Civil) registered in KCEI who have got adequate financial resources & sufficient past experience for the following work as per the schedule given below:
Name of the Work : Providing partition & interior works including electrical works at 6th Floor of KIADB Head Office, Gandhinagar Bengaluru.
The last date and time of receipt of tender is : 04.03.2026 upto 4.00 pm.
Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the Karnataka Public Procurement Portal https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.
Sd/-
Chief Engineer-1, KIADB Bengaluru
DIPR/CP/5733/Zen/2025-26

S. E. RAILWAY - TENDER
Tender No. DR-HQ-ADA-RMC-25-26-16.
For & on behalf of President of India, the General Manager (Engg.), South Eastern Railway, Garden Reach, Kolkata-700043 invites e-tender for the following works :
Description of the works : Ranchi-Adra Division : Conversion of existing bridges into Composite girders/Ballasted decks for running of 25T Axle loaded freight trains @ 100K/mph in (a) Bridge No. 369 (3x18.3m) of Orga-Haila section (b) Bridge No. 378 (3x18.3m) of Haila-Murtidih section (c) Bridge No. 83 DN (3x18.3m) 89 DN (1x18.3m) and 99 DN (2x18.3m) of Bokaro-Steel City section (d) Bridge No. 10 (2x6.10m + 5x18.3m) and 31 (1x18.3m) of Tatgarh-Bokaro Steel City Section. (e) Bridge No. 403 UP (2x6.10m + 2 x 12.2m + 1x18.3m) of Adra-Purulia section (2m Cell). Tender Value : ₹ 50,00,000.00
Earnest Money : ₹ 27,00,000/- Tender Document Cost : ₹ NIL Tender Closing Date & Time: 02.04.2026, 11:30 hrs.
Period of Completion : 18 Months.
Interested tenderers may visit website www.ireps.gov.in for full details/description of the Tenders and to know the status of the tender or as to submit their bids online. Physical/manual tender for this work will not be accepted. (PR-1283)

ಸಮಾಜ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣ ಇಲಾಖೆ
ಸಹಾಯಕ ಆಯುಕ್ತರ ಸಂಯುಕ್ತಾಧಿಕಾರಿಯವರ ಕಛೇರಿ, ವಸ್ತ್ರಹೊಲ ಉಪವಿಭಾಗ,
ಶಿವಾಜಿನಗರ-581187 email: acfanshiw@gmail.com
ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: ಸಂ.ಸಂ/ಅಂಗವಿಕಲರ/ಇ.ಟಿ.ಎಂ & ಎ.ಟಿ.ಎಂ/2025-26 Dated: 13/02/2026
ಇ-ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಸೂಚನೆ (ಇ-ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮೂಲಕ ಮಾತ್ರ)
2025-27ನೇ ಸಾಲಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಸಿಡಿಪಿ ಪ್ರಾಯೋಜಿತವಾದ ಬಂದ ಅಂಗವಿಕಲರಿಗಾಗಿ ಮತ್ತು ವಿಶೇಷಚೇತನ ಮತ್ತು ಮಂದಬುದ್ಧಿ ಪುನರ್ವಸತಿ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳನ್ನು ಕೈಗೊಳ್ಳಲು ಅರ್ಹ ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರಿಂದ ಇ-ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಆಹ್ವಾನಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳ ಹೆಸರು ಮತ್ತು ಅಂದಾಜು ಮೊತ್ತ ಹಾಗೂ ಇ-ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಲು ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ 2026-27ನೇ ಸಾಲಿನ ಮೀಸಲಾತಿಗಾಗಿ ಹೆಸರಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಇರುವಂತೆ ಇ-ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮೂಲಕ ಮಾತ್ರ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಸ್ವೀಕರಿಸಲಾಗುವುದು. ಸದರಿ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಲು ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ 12-03-2026 ರಂದು ಮಧ್ಯಾಹ್ನ 12.00 ಗಂಟೆಯವರೆಗೆ ಸ್ವೀಕರಿಸಲಾಗುವುದು. ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಮಾಹಿತಿಗಾಗಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ದಾಖಲೆಗಳನ್ನು ಸಂಬಂಧಪಟ್ಟ ಇಲಾಖೆಯ ಅಧಿಕೃತ ಜಾಲತಾಣದಲ್ಲಿ ಅಥವಾ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಪಡಿಸಿರುವ https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in ಜಾಲತಾಣ ಹಾಗೂ ಇಲಾಖೆಯ ಕಛೇರಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂಪರ್ಕಿಸುವುದು. ಇಲ್ಲಿನವರೆಗೆ ಸ್ವೀಕರಿಸಲ್ಪಟ್ಟ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ಗಳನ್ನು ಮಾತ್ರ ಪರಿಗಣಿಸಲಾಗುವುದು.
ಅಡಚಣೆಯ ವಿವರಗಳು: (1) ಕಾಲ ಹರಿ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಯ ಪ್ರಶಿಕ್ಷಣಾರ್ಥಿಯ ವಿಶೇಷಚೇತನ ವ್ಯಕ್ತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರಸವದಿಂದ ಉಂಟಾದ ಅಂಗವೈಕಲ್ಯತೆ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗೆ ಮತ್ತು ಅಂಗವೈಕಲ್ಯತೆ ಉಳ್ಳವರಿಗೆ ಸಂಬಂಧಪಟ್ಟಂತೆ ಅಂಗವೈಕಲ್ಯತೆ ಅಥವಾ ಅಂಗವೈಕಲ್ಯತೆ ಉಳ್ಳವರಿಗೆ ಸಂಬಂಧಪಟ್ಟಂತೆ ಮೀಸಲಾಗಿರುವ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿ ಮೊತ್ತದಲ್ಲಿ ಶೇಕಡಾ 10 ಕ್ಕಿಂತ ಕಡಿಮೆ ಮೊತ್ತ. (2) ಕೂಡಲ (Barkur) ಸೆಂಟರ್-160 ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ (3) ಅಮಾಸೆ (Ure Bhadra) ಸೆಂಟರ್-120 ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ ಅಡಚಣೆಗಳು ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ 280 ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ ಪ್ರಾಯೋಜಿತ ಮೊತ್ತ ₹.4,784.92, ಒಟ್ಟು ₹.12,62,160.00
(1) ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕ್ರಿಯೆ ಪ್ರಾರಂಭ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 12-03-2026 ಬೆಳಿಗ್ಗೆ 11.00 ಗಂಟೆ (2) ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ಗಳನ್ನು ಸ್ವೀಕರಿಸಲು ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 13-03-2026 ಬೆಳಿಗ್ಗೆ 11.00 ಗಂಟೆ (3) ಟಾಪ್ಸಿಕ್ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ಗಳನ್ನು ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 16-03-2026 ಬೆಳಿಗ್ಗೆ 11.00 ಗಂಟೆ (4) ಅರ್ಹತೆ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ಗಳ ಪಟ್ಟಿ ಪ್ರಕಟಿಸುವ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 17-03-2026 ಬೆಳಿಗ್ಗೆ 11.00 ಗಂಟೆ
ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಮಾಹಿತಿಗಾಗಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ದಾರರು ಈ ಕಛೇರಿಯನ್ನು ಅಥವಾ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಪಡಿಸಿರುವ ಇ-ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್‌ನ ಜಾಲತಾಣವನ್ನು ಸಂಪರ್ಕಿಸುವುದು.
ಸಹಿ/-, ಸಹಾಯಕ ಆಯುಕ್ತರು ಸಂಯುಕ್ತಾಧಿಕಾರಿಯವರು
ಶಿವಾಜಿನಗರ ಉಪ ವಿಭಾಗ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು
DIPR/CP/5734/Zen/2025-26

4001/35/2026
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER (CIVIL)
IDCO, IDCO TOWER, BHUBANESWAR.
Bid Identification No. Civil/BRT/4/2026-28
TCN No. 3134 dt. 03.02.2026
NOTICE INVITING TENDER UNDER NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDING THROUGH e-Procurement
1. Name of the Work : Construction of Block level Stadium (with Indoor Hall) in Jharsuguda Block (Ol Kalapali) under Sambalpur District.
2. Value of the Work : Rs. 1393.56 lakhs
3. Period of completion : 9 (Nine) Calendar Months
4. Availability of tender online for Bidding :
i. Start Date : 18.00 Hours of dt.20.02.2026.
ii. End date : 17.00 Hours of dt.07.03.2026.
iii. Opening date : 11.30 Hours of dt.09.03.2026.
Tender details can be seen from the e-procurement portal www.tenderwizard.com/Odisha or Addendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.
Sd/-
Chief General Manager (Civil)
IDCO, Bhubaneswar
DIPR/4001/35/2026

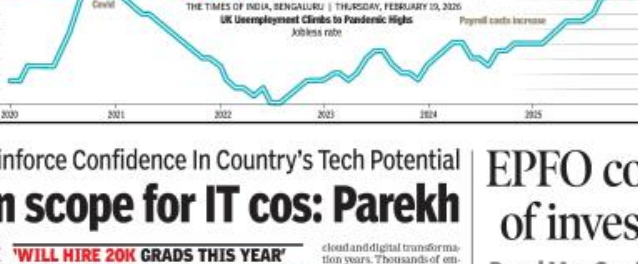
4001/34/2026
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER (CIVIL)
IDCO, IDCO TOWER, BHUBANESWAR
Bid Identification No. Civil/BRT/4/2026-28
TCN No. 3133 dt. 03.02.2026
NOTICE INVITING TENDER UNDER NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDING THROUGH e-Procurement
1. Name of the Work : Construction of Block level Stadium in Rourkela under Balasore District with GSM for 05 years
2. Value of the Work (Approx. Excluding GSM): Rs. 12.99 Crore
3. Period of completion : 12 (Twelve) Calendar Months
4. Availability of tender online for Bidding :
i. Start Date : 18.00 Hours of dt.20.02.2026.
ii. End date : 18.00 Hours of dt.10.03.2026.
iii. Opening date : 18.00 Hours of dt. 16.03.2026.
Tender details can be seen from the e-procurement portal www.tenderwizard.com/Odisha. Corrigendum or Addendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in IDCO website.
Sd/- Chief General Manager (Civil)
IDCO, Bhubaneswar
DIPR/4001/34/2026/Zen/2026014

TIMES BUSINESS
THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2026

UK Unemployment At 5-Year High

Paves Way for More Rate Cuts

UK unemployment reached its highest since the pandemic and wage growth eased as the labour market continued to weaken, prompting traders to increase bets on further interest-rate cuts from the Bank of England. The jobless rate climbed to 5.2% in the final quarter of last year, the highest since early 2021 and above the 5.1% economists were forecasting. Regular private sector wage growth, the BOE's preferred pay indicator, fell to 3.4%, the lowest level in over five years



Source: Bloomberg

- The figures are a blow to PM **Keir Starmer's** Labour govt, which is struggling in national opinion polls ahead of a crucial special election this month and local council elections in May
- Youth unemployment continued to rise, climbing to 14% for 16-24-year-olds, as young people continue to bear the brunt of the hiring slowdown. The jobless rate among that group was last higher in 2015

Advantage India: Leaders Reinforce Confidence In Country's Tech Potential

AI tools to widen scope for IT cos: Parekh

Sujit John & Shilpa Phadnis | TNN

New Delhi: Infosys CEO Salil Parekh suggested that stock market investors may be misreading the impact of AI tools from companies like Anthropic, arguing that rather than shrinking opportunities for IT services firms, such technologies are likely to expand and reshape the demand for their capabilities.

He said the tools can automate parts of software development, but that's only a slice of the enterprise technology lifecycle. Integrating the software into complex legacy systems, testing it, securing it, deploying it into production and maintaining it at scale are entirely different challenges, he said. Most large enterprises, he noted, operate in "brownfield" environments built over decades. Introducing AI into such landscapes requires orchestrating and integrating multiple elements, as also understanding the nuances of specific industries and companies—capabilities IT services firms have built over years of digital transformation work.

The share prices of leading IT services companies have dropped by 15-20% since early this month when Anthropic announced a slew of new and enhanced AI tools.

Parekh said AI is a $300-$400 billion opportunity for IT services companies by 2030—including in areas like helping enterprises with creating an AI strategy, getting their data ready for AI training, transforming their processes with AI, modernising their legacy systems, and ensuring the AI systems can be trusted. Clients, he said, are seeking Infosys' help in all of these areas.

He said the world is heading into an era where the amount of software required would explode because of AI. That he said will also ensure the IT services workforce will continue to expand.

Even as investors worry that tools like Anthropic and Cognition will reduce the need for large teams, Infosys is still hiring at scale. Parekh said the company is on track to add about 20,000 college graduates this year and hire a similar number next year. Net headcount has risen in the first three quarters as new work comes in.

The shift, Parekh said, is not fewer jobs, but different skills. Even if AI tools lift engineering productivity many times over, he said demand could still rise faster than productivity, requiring more engineers. Infosys is betting on reskilling its employees. Parekh said that's what the company did even during the cloud and digital transformation years. Thousands of employees are already being certified on AI tools, platforms and delivery methods.

He also pushed back against the idea that AI makes learning computing and programming fundamentals optional. Freshers at Infosys, he said, are still trained to programme without AI tools first. Only then are they given AI copilots and agents. "If you cannot write code yourself, you cannot assess whether the machine's output is correct," he said.

The most valuable talent in the AI era, he said, will blend strong engineering with deep domain understanding. AI agents, he said, can automate tasks, but they struggle with industry nuance. However, he acknowledged that AI tools would raise expectations of clients, who will now demand faster delivery, tighter integration and measurable impact.

'WILL HIRE 20K GRADS THIS YEAR'

> AI tools can automate parts of software development, but that's only a slice of the enterprise technology lifecycle. Integrating the software into complex legacy systems, testing it, securing it, deploying it into production and maintaining it at scale are entirely different challenges

Infosys is on track to add about 20,000 college graduates this year and hire a similar number next year
— **Salil Parekh** | CEO, INFOSYS

AI is a $300-$400 billion opportunity for IT services companies by 2030

EPFO considers review of investment options

Panel May See Experts From Multiple Fields As Retirement Body Chases Higher Returns

Shiva Rajora @timesofindia.com

New Delhi: The Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is likely to constitute a high-powered committee to study its investment objectives, policy and guidelines as it eyes higher returns on its nearly Rs 31 lakh crore corpus based on contribution from over 50 crore members.

The issue was discussed at last week's investment committee meeting, which was weighing the feasibility of investing in the equity markets beyond exchange traded funds (ETFs), tracking the benchmark NSE Nifty and BSE sensex indices.

The panel, proposed for which comes from a government representative, will see experts from multiple fields and govt departments, a person who attended the meeting told **TOI**. According to its current investment pattern notified in April 2015, EPFO allocates 45-65% of fresh accretions to govt securities, while 20-45% goes towards investments in corporate debt papers, with up to 15% permitted to be allocated towards short-term debt instruments. That leaves around 5-15% of the flow for equities, via index funds. As of Dec 31, it had invested nearly 88% in govt bonds and 10.6% in equities, officials said.

In the meeting, Crisil, which is the consultant, presented the feasibility of investing in emerging, sunrise sectors such as rare earths, railways and defence, along with examining yields of sectoral, factor and style-based indices. Some of the possible sectoral indices included those tracking banking and financial services, information technology, global indices, and FMCG. It also assessed indices that track momentum stocks, value stocks, and low volatility stocks.

The retirement fund body is at work to increase its income as it is announcing significantly higher annual returns for its members than prevailing yields on govt bonds in recent years, where most of its funds are parked. It is set to announce the interest rate for the current financial year next month.

Last year, the RBI had suggested a series of measures to "improve" its investment management and accounting practices. It has appointed the IIM Kozhikode to examine its equity exit policy and the Interest stabilisation reserve. Besides, the investment panel also approved the proposal to introduce performance-linked incentives for its fund managers, wherein it will allocate greater funds to those who give better returns, as part of the new benchmark methodology for its debt investments.

"The new benchmark methodology includes an accelerated negative marking provision for any fund manager who fails to meet it, which will adversely affect its portfolio allocation. The new methodology also discourages the fund managers from parking funds in low-yielding TREPS which are basically short-term, low-risk money market instruments," the source added.

How's Your Provident Fund Invested

EPFO INVESTMENT CORPUS (As on Dec 31, 2025)

	Invested in ₹ crore	Share (%)
Govt securities	21,27,983	68.8
Debt instruments	5,83,136	18.7
Short-term debt instruments	51,956	1.7
Equities	3,26,839	10.6
Asset-backed, Trust structured & Miscellaneous	2,086	0.1

According to its current investment pattern notified in April 2015, EPFO allocates 45-65% of fresh accretions to govt securities, 20-45% to debt instruments, 5-15% to equities via index funds, and 0-5% in short-term debt instruments

Source: Govt

'Now, India powers half of ServiceNow's global R&D'

Shilpa Phadnis & Vaitheeswaran B | TNN

New Delhi: Nearly 60% of ServiceNow's global R&D is based in India, making the country central to its innovation strategy according to president and chief product officer **Amit Zavery**. Speaking to **TOI** on the sidelines of the India AI Impact Summit 2026, he said the Hyderabad and Bengaluru centres form the company's largest footprint outside the US.

ServiceNow employs around 6,000 people in India—roughly one in five engineers globally—and its India Technology & Business Center has grown at a 35% CAGR over the past three years. India plays a pivotal role, driving core development across the AI platform, security, CRM (customer relationship management), and emerging capabilities while advancing conversational interfaces and user experiences.

ServiceNow, which commands a market capitalisation of over $81 billion and about $13 billion in annual revenue, recently witnessed a stock sell-off amid investor concerns that large language models could disrupt its business model and weigh on future growth and margins. Despite market anxiety about AI disrupting software firms, Zavery remains unfazed.

"Markets often overreact to short-term signals, but they rarely reflect long-term potential. AI is transformational—like the internet or the cloud—and there will be winners and laggards." Integration, he added, is key. "We combine AI, data, workflow, and security into a single platform—something no other company offers at this scale," as ServiceNow pushes into an addressable market exceeding $300 billion.

ServiceNow, he said, should be viewed as a platform company rather than a traditional SaaS provider. "LLMs are useless for enterprises mainly because they do not have context, security, compliance, and workflow," Zavery said.

AGI 5-10 yrs away, science to surge, jobs to shift: Hassabis

Supriya.Roy@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Artificial general intelligence (AGI) could be years away, but its profound impact in the coming decade will be defined by scientific breakthroughs, not job extinction, Google DeepMind chief Demis Hassabis said at the India AI Impact Summit.

"We're at a threshold moment where AGI... is on the horizon, maybe in the next five to ten years," said Hassabis. Yet he cautioned: "So, I don't think we're there yet."

For India, Hassabis suggested applying AI deeply in areas of existing strength, from agriculture to creative industries, and urged young people to become fluent in AI tools, which could make them "almost superpowered."

He also set a high bar for AGI. A true system must exhibit all human cognitive capabilities, across creativity, long-term planning and consistent reasoning across tasks. Today's models, he said, remain "very impressive" but flawed. These models cannot continually learn once deployed and struggle with long-term coherent plans and struggle with simple tasks.

The nearer-term shift, he argued, lies in science. "There is no I spent my whole life and career working on AI is I saw it... as maybe the ultimate tool for science," he said. Much of research involves detecting patterns in vast datasets, a task well suited to AI systems.

He pointed to AlphaFold, Google DeepMind's protein structure prediction system, as evidence that AI can "massively speed up our research and accelerate scientific discovery across almost any subject area." Over the next decade, he expects a "new golden era for scientific discoveries."

Humans, he stressed, remain central. "The next phase is going to be incredible... for human experts and scientists," particularly in cross-disciplinary work. Fully autonomous "co-scientists" remain more than a decade away.

"In AI systems today, it's the human using it, putting in the energy and the question. Even in science, we have to supply the hypothesis and what the right research question is and then these tools help us get to those answers more quickly," the Nobel prize awardee argued.

Still, AI is "dual purpose," he warned. Near-term risks include cyber threats and the misuse of AI in sensitive biological research.

CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM, GOVERNANCE IS KEY

- "New golden era" for science
- AI to augment scientists, not replace jobs
- Current systems lack consistency, long-term planning
- India should apply AI in areas of strength

Demis Hassabis
CEO, GOOGLE DEEPMIND

Sarvam rolls out 105-bn parameter AI LLM model

Vaitheeswaran.B @timesofindia.com

New Delhi: In a major step for India's push to compete in advanced AI, homegrown startup Sarvam has launched a foundational 105-billion-parameter large language model (LLM), along with a range of tools and systems aimed at commercialisation.

The company said the model performs on par with other open and closed models of similar size, including in agentic and tool-calling capabilities. Co-founder **Pratyush Kumar** said the model outperformed the 600-billion-parameter Deepseek R1 model released last year and Google's Gemini 2.5 Flash on Indian language technical benchmarks. Kumar said this demonstrates that India can build state-of-the-art AI models from scratch. He added that Sarvam chose the model's size carefully based on real-world use cases, and expects performance to further improve over time.

In LLMs, "parameters" are numerical weights that represent the model's learned knowledge and capabilities. For comparison, leading global models from companies like OpenAI are reportedly built with trillions of parameters.

Sarvam was among the first AI startups selected under the India AI Mission last April to develop sovereign AI models. The company received govt support, including access to GPUs for training. After facing early scepticism, the Bengaluru startup has begun to shift perceptions through improvements in its model performance and AI strategy. Sarvam plans to enter the AI devices space with smart glasses and deploy smaller, task-specific models on devices such as mobiles, cars and other smart systems.

Yotta to invest $2bn for AI hub with top Nvidia chips

Akhil.George@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: India is set to host one of Asia's largest AI supercluster, with Yotta Data Services unveiling plans to deploy more than 20,000 Nvidia Blackwell Ultra GPUs in a $2 billion investment. The facility is expected to go live by Aug 2026. The infrastructure, to be housed at Yotta's Greater Noida hyperscale campus and supported by its Navi Mumbai operations, marks a significant escalation in the country's AI compute ambitions.

For Sunil Gupta, co-founder & CEO of Yotta, the bet on scale is rooted in a structural shift in demand. He told **TOI** that India's AI ecosystem has always had talent, data and startups, but lacked compute. That gap, he said, is something Yotta identified years ago as a potential bottleneck. Today, Yotta runs around 10,000 GPUs, with more being added, and Gupta argues the next phase will be even more compute-intensive.

> As Indian-built models such as those serving agriculture, healthcare and education move into production and reach population scale, millions and billions of people will come concurrently to access them
> **Sunil Gupta** | CO-FOUNDER & CEO, YOTTA

Much of the industry's attention has focused on training frontier models. Gupta, however, insists inferencing (where the trained model generates content, predictions and decisions) will ultimately require even larger volumes of infrastructure. As Indian-built models such as those serving agriculture, healthcare and education move into production and reach population scale, "millions and billions of people will come concurrently" to access them, he said, requiring "thousands and thousands of GPUs purely for inferencing."

Gupta suggested that India could serve large parts of the APAC region and Global South from its data centres. Yotta is in discussions with multiple countries exploring whether their AI capacity could be delivered from India.

Will fast-track 10-15 high profile cases: ICAI head

Times News Network

New Delhi: The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has set up a special group within its Financial Reporting Review Board (FRRB) to fast-track 10 to 15 high-profile cases involving public interest, a senior official from ICAI said on Wednesday.

"We are forming a special board within the FRRB on top priority... more than 10 to 15 cases are there which have public interest. These things will be taken on priority. It will take another two months and we will be able to give our findings," ICAI president Prasanna Kumar D said at a press conference. Among the prominent matters under review are cases relating to Gensol Engineering and Infusinal Bank, which got into regulatory trouble last year after financial fraud concerns.

He said that the earlier six-month timeline indicated by ICAI could not be met due to technical reasons and that once the review process is completed in 2 months, serious lapses, if found, will lead to disciplinary proceedings, while routine or procedural shortcomings may result in advisories instead of escalation. Kumar also spoke on the growing role of chartered accountants in Global Capability Centres (GCCs). "Chartered accountants have a particularly important role because most services exported through GCCs are finance-related," he said.

ICAI, which has a presence in 47 countries, is encouraging members to build international linkages and export services from India, through training programmes and local language training in countries like Japan and Germany. Kumar also said ICAI has introduced 11 Information Systems Audit Standards (ISAS) to strengthen digital audits. The standards, effective from Feb 2026 with a six-month recommendatory period, aim to formalise information systems audit, covering areas like cybersecurity, digital data protection and IT governance.

Skills drive fresher hiring across sectors

▸ Continued from page 1

Chennai (63%) benefits from manufacturing and infrastructure-led hiring. But the rebound comes with a caveat — recruiters are now looking for proof of skills, not just proof of degrees, according to the TeamLease EdTech Career Outlook Report (HY1 2026). Internships, live projects, hands-on training and real-world exposure are emerging as key filters in entry-level recruitment.

E-commerce firms and startups are adding freshers in digital sales, web development and marketing analytics, while manufacturing is seeing demand for logistics coordinators, battery assembly technicians and automation-linked roles.

Across sectors, employers identified business intelligence analyst, cloud operations associate and digital campaign analyst as the most in-demand fresher roles.

The report is based on 1,811 employer responses collected between Nov 2025 and Jan 2026. While hiring intent is clearly improving, the message to fresh graduates is unambiguous: those who can demonstrate applied skills will get hired faster.

'Push fgn investment while protecting sovereignty'

Shilpa Phadnis & Vaitheeswaran B | TNN

New Delhi: Microsoft president Brad Smith, in an interview, outlined the opportunities and responsibilities AI presents for the Global South, with a particular focus on India. He noted the need for digital sovereignty, and India-US collaboration through trade agreements to protect sovereignty while enabling cross-border innovation. Smith said India is Microsoft's second-largest employee base, with 24,000 employees. Excerpts:

Microsoft's AI Diffusion Report underscores a growing AI adoption divide between Global North and South. Beyond infrastructure investments, what will it take for AI to help reduce inequalities?

What the diffusion report shows is a rapidly emerging AI divide. Adoption in the Global North is about 25%, while the Global South is around 14%. India is slightly better at more than 15%, but still closer to the Global South. We should act with urgency because the greatest divide today is economic, partly created by unequal access to technology and electricity. We are spending $50 billion by the end of the decade bringing AI to the Global South, while prioritising skilling and measurement systems.

> India is among the best-positioned countries in the Global South, and in some ways, globally. Human talent remains the most precious natural resource, and software development talent is especially critical. AI is not diminishing that; if anything, it makes developers even more important
> **Brad Smith** | PRESIDENT, MICROSOFT

Where does India stand in this paradigm shift tied to the $50 billion Global South push?

India is among the best-positioned countries in the Global South, and in some ways, globally. Human talent remains the most precious natural resource, and software development talent is especially critical. AI is not diminishing that; if anything, it makes developers even more important. India has not just many engineers, but highly talented ones. That is why it is the second largest country in the world in terms of Microsoft employees. The govt should invest in this opportunity, encourage AI adoption and foreign investment, while protecting digital sovereignty.

Many firms advocate sovereign tech stacks, but can they truly be sovereign if controlled by a few firms and governed by US regulations?

We need balance. Advancing digital sovereignty is essential, and we are committed to it. Future India-US trade agreements should ensure reciprocity, keeping markets open while guaranteeing certainty of supply. Few countries are better positioned to achieve this. India's engineers must be able to build software for the US, just as American technology companies should bring innovation to India. By leaning together, both nations can create a new global model that protects sovereignty while enabling collaboration.

How do you view India's AI talent trajectory amid the rapid rise of AI?

Few countries match India's strengths, especially in software development talent. AI will change jobs, enhancing productivity, growing economies, and replacing some roles. Denying that would be naive. But existing roles can evolve for the better if leaders in technology, business, and govt act wisely. This is shaping up to be one of the defining economic stories of the next 5-10 years.

SBI MF to file docs for listing of ₹13.5k cr IPO by mid-March

Mumbai: SBI Mutual Fund, India's largest fund house, is set to file its offer document for its Rs 13.5 billion (around Rs 13,500 crore) IPO by mid-March. The filing is expected to be through the confidential route, sources said. Shareholders and employees of SBI would have a quota in the SBIMF offer through which the two sponsors of the fund house, SBI and Amundi (of France) are selling 6.3% and 3.7% stakes, respectively.

Kotak Mahindra Capital, Axis Capital, SBI Capital Markets, Motilal Oswal Investment Advisors, ICICI Securities, JM Financial, HSBC Holdings, Jefferies and Bank of America to manage the offering, sources said. In 2025, two fund houses—ICICI Prudential and Canara Robeco—were listed on the bourses. In addition, over the last few years HDFC MF, Nippon Life India MF, Aditya Birla Sun Life MF and UTI MF were listed. In terms of m-cap, I-Pru MF is at the top with a valuation of Rs 1.5 lakh crore, followed by HDFC MF at Rs 1.2 lakh crore. — **Partha Sinha**

HUL to invest ₹2k cr to boost premium category capex

Mumbai: Hindustan Unilever (HUL) on Wednesday said it will invest up to Rs 2,000 crore to expand manufacturing capacity in fast-growing premium categories across beauty & wellbeing and home care liquids. The investments will be spread over two years and cover multiple locations, the firm said.

The proposed investment is in line with HUL's strategy of focusing on fewer, bigger bets and strengthening its presence in high-growth demand spaces, the company said.

"This investment reflects our strategic focus on scaling our brands and creating categories of the future to meet evolving consumer needs. It also underscores our commitment to building a resilient, technology-enabled supply chain that delivers superior value to consumers," said Priya Nair, CEO & MD at HUL.

After several months of sluggishness, HUL hinted at demand uptick in the Dec quarter on tax cuts and benign inflation. TNN

CONTRAPUNTO

What is originality? Undetected plagiarism

- WILLIAM INGE

GALGOTAI

Running a smooth global event isn't rocket science. Reputational costs of embarrassment can be high

Wednesday should have been Sarvam AI's day to bask in LLM glory, but the buzz was stolen by a private university and its Chinese robot dog. What the Galgotias team did isn't surprising. Right from kindergarten, schools commend and reward children for projects polished by parents and paid artists. Five-year-olds are scored on the finesse of thermocol solar systems. Genuine rough-edged effort never finishes on the podium. Team Galgotias merely followed old instincts in choosing store-bought celebrity. That it did so at the world's largest AI summit is really the organisers' fault, for they should have carefully vetted every entry.

Let's get this straight, this AI summit isn't any old *mela*. It's drawn tech royalty, global media attention follows, and there will be a guiding declaration at the end. That's the template set by Britain in 2023, and followed by S Korea and France in 2024 and 2025. India agreed to host this year's summit last Feb, so it had a full year to get everything right. Instead, we've faced some serious embarrassment. Day 1 was chaotic. People struggled to enter the venue. There were complaints about the registration system and digital payments. Both were missed opportunities. Here was our chance to show the world we're first-rate, tech-enabled organisers. It was also a chance to sell UPI to the West, but weak connectivity made it a cash-only outing. Some participants complained about stolen exhibits, and then the Chinese robot scandal spoilt the effect on Day 2.

IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has apologised for the first day's mess, but in hindsight, did we really need to make this summit a carnival? By now, India has decades of event management experience. Major shows, like the Auto Expo, have separate business and public days, and that should have been the format of this summit too. That way, all the good stuff that happened over the past three days wouldn't have been overshadowed by bad press. Sarvam's a prime example. Here's an AI that beats the likes of ChatGPT hands down in reading and translating Indian languages. You'd want it on your phone to read menus and street signs away from your home state. You'd also need it for researching Indian texts. And states could use it to speedily digitise old land records, for instance. Sarvam shows that regardless of the heft of Western AI models there is room for niche LLMs. AI isn't one race but many.

Is AI Good For Democracy?

As citizens leverage AI to express their demands, govts answer in the same measure. Sometimes policy conversations are just bots talking to bots. In this arms race of technology adoption, US mega-corporations gain from all sides. Lessening this concentration of power is what's critical

Bruce Schneier & Nathan Sanders

Security technologist, Harvard Kennedy School

Data scientist, Harvard University

Politicians fixate on the global race for technological supremacy between US and China. They debate geopolitical implications of chip exports, latest model releases from each country, and military applications of AI. Someday, they believe, we might see advancements in AI tip the scales in a superpower conflict.

But the most important arms race of the 21st century is already happening elsewhere and, while AI is definitely the weapon of choice, combatants are distributed across dozens of domains.

Academic journals are flooded with AI-generated papers, and are turning to AI to help review submissions. Brazil's court system started using AI to triage cases, only to face an increasing volume of cases filed with AI help. Open source software developers are being overwhelmed with code contributions from bots. Newspapers, music, social media, education, investigative journalism, hiring, and procurement are all being disrupted by a massive expansion of AI use.

Each of these is an arms race. Adversaries within a system frantically seeking an edge against their competition by continuously expanding their use of a common technology.

Beneficiaries of these arms races are US mega-corporations capturing wealth from the rest of us at an unprecedented rate. A substantial fraction of global economy has reoriented around AI in just the past few years, and that trend is accelerating. In parallel, this industry's lobbying interests are quickly becoming the object, rather than the subject, of US govt power.

To understand these arms races, let's look at an example of particular interest to democracies worldwide: how AI is changing the relationship between democratic govt and citizens. ***Interactions that used to happen between people and elected representatives are expanding to a massive scale, with AIs taking the roles that humans once did.***

In a notorious example from 2017, US Federal Communications Commission opened a comment platform on the web to get public input on internet regulation. It was quickly flooded with millions of comments fraudulently orchestrated by broadband providers to oppose FCC regulation of their industry. From the other side, a 18-year-old college student responded by submitting millions of comments of his own supporting the regulation. Both sides were using software primitive by the standards of today's AI.

Nearly a decade later, it is getting harder for citizens to tell when they're talking to a govt bot, or when an online conversation about public policy is just bots talking to bots. When constituents leverage AI to communicate better, faster, and more, it pressures govt officials to do the same.

This may sound futuristic, but it's become a familiar reality in US. Staff in US Congress are using AI to make their constituent email correspondence more efficient. Politicians campaigning for office are adopting AI tools to automate fundraising and voter outreach. By one 2025 estimate, a fifth of public submissions to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau were already being generated with AI assistance.

All Things AI

People and organisations are adopting AI here because it solves a real problem that has made mass advocacy campaigns ineffective in the past: quantity has been inversely proportional to both quality and relevance. It's easy for govt agencies to dismiss general comments in favour of more specific and actionable ones. That makes it hard for regular people to make their voices heard. Most of us don't have the time to learn the specifics or to express ourselves in this kind of detail. AI makes that contextualisation and personalisation easy. And as the volume and length of constituent comments grow, agencies turn to AI to facilitate review and response.

That's the arms race. People are using AI to submit comments, which requires those on the receiving end to use AI to wade through the comments received. To the extent that one side does attain an advantage, it will likely be temporary. And yet, there is real harm created when one side exploits another in these adversarial systems. ***Constituents of democracies lose out if their public servants use AI-generated responses to ignore and dismiss their voices rather than to listen to and include them.*** Scientific enterprise is weakened. If fraudulent papers sloppily generated by AI overwhelm legitimate research.

As we write in our new book, *Rewiring Democracy*, the arms race dynamic is inevitable. Every actor in an adversarial system is incentivised and, in the absence of new regulation in this fast moving space, free to use new technologies to advance its own interests. Yet some of these examples are heartening. They signal that, even if you face an AI being used against you, there's an opportunity to use the tech for your own benefit.

But, right now, it's obvious who is benefitting most from AI. A handful of American Big Tech corps and their owners are extracting trillions of dollars from the manufacture of AI chips, development of AI data centres, and operation of so-called 'frontier' AI models. Regardless of which side pulls ahead in each arms race scenario, the house always wins. Corporate AI giants profit from the race dynamic itself.

As formidable as the near-monopoly positions of today's Big Tech giants may seem, people and govts have substantial capability to fight back. ***Various democracies are resisting this concentration of wealth and power with tools of anti-trust regulation, protections for human rights, and public alternatives to corporate AI.*** All of us worried about the AI arms race and committed to preserving the interests of our communities and our democracies should think in both these terms: how to use the tech to our own advantage, and how to resist the concentration of power AI is being exploited to create.

Grammar Of Justice

Courts must heed SC's message. Payment to victim in lieu of sentencing inverts justice

SC on Tuesday read high courts and trial courts a lesson on sentencing for the *n*th time – reducing sentences in serious crimes goes against both letter and spirit of the law and is counterproductive in the long run, since the law then is no deterrent. SC was hearing an appeal against a Madras HC order that let off an attempt-to-murder convict on the ground he would financially compensate the victim. SC called out what it described as a persistent "misunderstanding" among courts – that convicts in grave offences can be leniently sentenced if they pay off the aggrieved party.

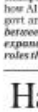
For over two decades, SC has warned against judges projecting "undue sympathy" with "inadequate sentences that would do more harm to the justice system and undermine public confidence". In 2004, it observed that "imposing a lenient sentence without considering its effect on social order may be a futile exercise." It underlined serious offences – crimes against women top of the list – that demand proportionate punishment regardless of compensation or mitigating circumstances. Indeed, undue sympathy is most egregiously evident in cases involving crimes against women. Last March, SC took cognisance of an Allahabad HC order that almost carved out a new category of offence – "preparation to commit rape", which would invite a lighter sentence. SC overturned that order too. But the pattern is all too familiar. Far too many judges in far too many courts have discussed or ordered that survivors of sexual assault should "marry the rapist" or accept payment as closure. Such orders invert justice.

Compensation has its place in criminal justice. Victim compensation acknowledges harm. But compensation in lieu of punishment is no justice. When courts dilute statutory punishments, they weaken deterrence and send a troubling signal that grave crimes are negotiable. Criminal law isn't a bargain between offender and victim. It is strange high courts have to be reminded of that.

Harvard Or Dharwad: On Justice For The Indian Woman

It is ironic that a judicial handbook to combat stereotypes itself got stereotyped. But fine-tuning it to be more responsive to local circumstances is a good initiative

Arghya Sengupta



It is not often that a Chief Justice of India publicly questions the wisdom of his own institution in open Court. Which is why, the observation of the present CJI, as reported in the press, that a handbook published by the Supreme Court during the tenure of one of his predecessors to combat gender stereotypes is too "Harvard-oriented" and requires revision, was unexpected. Such introspection is healthy, and doing it publicly is exactly what transparency demands. But what does it mean for a handbook on gender to be "Harvard-oriented"? Should it be, say, Dharwad-oriented?

Conceptually, it is doubtful, whether the phrase "Harvard-oriented" is meaningful in any way. Harvard, after all, is a university. Like most good universities, it has a wide diversity of professors and students holding an even wider diversity of viewpoints. Lawrence Tribe, a widely respected constitutional academic who has argued for Trump to be prosecuted, is colleagues at Harvard Law School with Adrian Vermeule, the conservative scholar who defends some of Trump's most questionable actions. Whether there is something common to both of them that can be considered to be the core, the "basic structure" of Harvard if you will, is doubtful. Without such a core, "Harvard-oriented" is an empty phrase.

Though empty, the phrase may not necessarily be hollow. Perhaps what CJI had in mind was Harvard not as a specific university, but as a proxy for an academic institution. After all, he followed up his statement with a prod to "fine-tune" the handbook so that it can become "practical" and help in training judges. Any improvements should always be welcome but this begs the question – is the handbook excessively academic?

Through it might appear to be so at first blush, a close reading of the document dispels this notion. It contains a set of common stereotypes that pervade judicial thinking and gently nudges the reader to an alternative possibility where the stereotype is not true. It cites an example where a court found it "surprising" that a woman who was raped did not complain immediately. The handbook suggests that the delay is not because the woman is fabricating a story, but rather because it takes courage to report such a traumatic event in one's life.

It then provides a handy practical checklist on the law relating to gender-based violence to assist lawyers and judges. It extracts the relevant case law from the Supreme Court, which instructs judges to ignore the sexual history of the victim, give credence to her testimony and not hold the fact of delay in filing a case against her. Having been put together by a committee of judges, lawyers and court staff, it is not surprising that the handbook is specifically written with a view to helping the legal fraternity handle cases of gender-based violence. It is ironic that a practical handbook to combat stereotypes itself got stereotyped into something it tries very hard not to be.

Dalpat Sahi

Maybe Harvard wasn't used as proxy for an academic institution, but rather as a metaphor for a foreign institution. CJI has a valid point here. The sub-committee, law clerks and researchers who have been credited with much of the work that has gone into the handbook, appear to have had very little representation from subordinate judiciary, a key intended readership for this handbook.

The handbook has a test to determine cognitive biases, but no survey on what trial court lawyers and judges actually need. It has suggestions on hidden prejudice in the choice of words (using "prostitute" instead of "sex worker") but is entirely written in English, a language that is not the first language for most of the judges and lawyers for whom it is written. There is certainly a case to have customised versions in each of India's languages, which call out prejudicial terms in such languages and provide local examples.

Despite this, one wishes that CJI had avoided the "Harvard". It is well-known that former CJI DY Chandrachud during whose tenure the handbook was published, is an alumnus of Harvard. This statement will only further the incipient view that in the last two decades, the Supreme Court of India has become less of an institution, and more a collection of individuals. One CJI started a "Social Justice Bench" to hear public interest cases, another scrapped it. On the administrative side, an Artificial Intelligence Committee was set up by one CJI, a successor, for all practical purposes, discontinued it. Such examples abound.

The question, at its core, is about institutional integrity and continuity. For CJI Surya Kant, the institution has always come first. This is why his call to fine-tune the handbook with a view to making it more responsive to local circumstances, instead of abandoning it altogether, is best viewed as an incremental improvement to a fundamentally laudable initiative. It should be welcomed.

As the National Judicial Academy takes up this task, let's pause and reflection what is at stake. We live in a society that can be deeply unjust to women. Judiciary does better than most, but sometimes unconsciously reverts to unjust stereotypes. The handbook is a well-intentioned effort to correct that. In this it is not alone. Suryakant Tripathi *Nirala*, the giant of Hindi literature after whom the CJI is named, evocatively wrote about a woman, hard at work, breaking stones ("woh todti pathar"). She had neither shade, nor rest, just a quiet determination to complete her work. Ultimately, a handbook may be written one way or another, but must serve that Indian woman who is hard at work on a hot summer day, breaking stones to earn her living.

The writer is Research Director, Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy. Views are personal

Jockeying for the Horse

We too can get 'Fired' up for the new Chinese year

Bachi Karkaria

The Year of the Fire Horse began on Tuesday. Whatever our geopolitical-economic wishlist, only the blinkered believe that China happily trots along with our agenda; its normal policy is breathing fire at us. However, let's set aside our neighbour's *Arunachal-ekti* and other Lines of No Control, and talk about about our own versions of this Chinese zodiac sign.

Since we are always saddled with them, *netas* are the first to canter to mind. While the Fire Horse comes round only once in 60 years, our politicians do so every five, or less. Rahul wants to hold the reins, but too often seems to be just horsing around. However, even those with the whip-hand readily behave like show horses, performing for ecstatic spectators. Unlike conventional entertainment, here the audience gets paid.

Once-fancied foreign breeds like English Thoroughbreds and more so Arab stallions are now being aggressively phased out. In their place, there's a patriotic revival of glorious Indian ones such as the (no-longer) Royal Marwari and hardy Kathiawari. The polo-playing Manipuri and sturdy Spiti strains are preoccupied with more pressing concerns. The Maratha Light Cavalry is a regiment; it's not to be confused with the 'Maratha warhorse'.

erratica

The rich urban pasture is also dotted with Fire Horses. Newly elected municipal authorities and once-somnolent *sarkari* officials are fired up with the present buzzword, 'development'. But this usually leaves the city in ashes/debris.

Dream horses can become nightmares in business too. Some start-ups gallop into 'unicorns'; the early promise of others turns out to be as mythical as that horned beast.

This scenario is even more evident in matrimony. Even when he doesn't turn into a nightmare, he seldom becomes a workhorse, leaving the wife to clear the Augean table.

How does the new Chinese year's zodiac sign work in romance? Well, you might get fired up into horsing around with a love interest. But chances are she'll snorta 'Neigh'.

***

Alec Smart sang: "Our MacBharat has a dream. AI-AI-ho. Wich a Sam-Sam here, a Huang-Huang there, a Sundar Pichh, Pichh everywhere."

Calvin & Hobbes

Sacredspace

Lent is a time of going very deeply into ourselves. What is it that stands between us and God? Between us and our brothers and sisters? Between us and life, the life of the Spirit? Whatever it is, let us relentlessly tear it out, without a moment's hesitation.

Catherine Doherty

Religious Fasting: An Ecological Perspective

Christopher Mendonca

Christian liturgical season of Lent is closely linked to 40-day sojourn of Israel in the desert as they journeyed to the Promised Land. The 40-day season of Lent is a time for fasting and abstinence. It is a period of self-discipline, a reassessment of priorities, and a renewed hope for transformation. Religious traditions universally regard this discipline as a time of personal renewal. In light of our present-day ecological crisis, many religious traditions have also begun to understand the discipline of fasting in context of care for the Earth and ecologically sustainable living.

Fasting, at its most basic level, is giving our bodies much needed rest. As a spiritual discipline, however, it involves giving up a taste for certain foods, as if we have already tasted something better.

Meditation as practised in the eastern Christian tradition is one of the suggested disciplines for season of Lent. This practice aims at coming into inner silence through the faithful repetition of one's prayer-word/mantra. The simplicity of this practice encapsulates coming into stillness of mind and body, and coming to rest. It resonates well with Jewish Sabbath, a day of rest. More than a mere outward discipline, Season of Lent can be seen as a time to come to an awareness that our present environmental crisis has its roots in loss of stillness in us. It is expressed in the restless desire for growth, production and consumption.

THE SPEAKING TREE

The Sabbath principle included resting the land from cultivation one year in seven; giving the Earth time and space to restore itself. Poignantly, the word for 'rest' in Hebrew does not mean just *doing nothing*. It means intentionally to cease from activity for a time. Rest can be seen as part of ecologically sustainable living.

The Season of Lent can be seen as a time for learning and choosing to do less, as an alternative to compulsive growth and activity. A contemplative practice such as meditation prepares us to cease from some of our destructive old habits. As a result, we not only become better persons but also begin to adopt practices that are ecologically less destructive. Meditation enables us to understand better our place on Earth. We can learn to live more simply, desire less, buy less, emit less carbon.

In giving our mind and bodies their well-deserved rest, we recover a sense of wonder and joy as we behold creation with new eyes. We now have the time to be sensitive to the needs of others, deepen our relationships and give our lives a meaning that often eludes us. Through a daily meditative practice, we can piece the veil of consumerism and connect with what is of ultimate value.

Partners in apartheid fight, Indian South Africans facing racism again

Edwin Naidu

Racial targeting has cast the spotlight on relations between communities in the country that seeded Mahatma Gandhi's campaign against oppression and injustice

Last Dec, a rather unassuming video went viral. In it, a South African woman — a former airline employee — is seen hurling a stream of invective at a fellow passenger on an aircraft, asking the person to "go back to India". "Indians and the Taj Mahal smell like sh*t," she says.

In the video, which quickly racked up views on social media, the woman's beard saying, "I work at the airline... Every time there are Indians on the Durban flights, you guys smell like sh*t. Go back to India." The airline, confirming the woman was indeed a former employee, condemned the video and her sentiments.

Another incident from the same time — a TikTok video targeting Indian South Africans around the time of PM Narendra Modi's visit for a G20 summit — added to the ongoing narrative against Indians, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, where most of the country's 1.5 million Indians live. The recording, which claimed South Africans of Indian origin "have another country to go to", was dismissed as "racist and ignorant" by African National Congress (ANC) KwaZulu-Natal spokesman Fazile Sibisi.

More than three decades after South Africa's 1994 transition to democracy, the Indian community — descendants of indentured labourers and traders who'd moved there starting in the 1860s — find themselves at a crossroads, questioning their role and relevance in the country.

Despite their vital contributions to the nation's social, economic, and political fabric, the persistence and evolution of racism — highlighted by recent viral incidents and political events — reveals both progress and enduring challenges.

Nanda Soobben, a South African cartoonist, captures the current situation in the country

Racism In A Democratic Era

The South African constitution protects Indians living in the country, yet many feel discomfort about their standing due to sporadic cases of racism and affirmative action laws which, some say, bar them from govt jobs or public education.

The aircraft incident underlines the challenges facing Indian South Africans — and all minority communities — after three decades of democracy. It highlights the prevalence of racial prejudice, the fragility of social cohesion, and the need for institutional reform and community action to combat them.

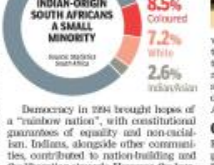
The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation's 2025 South African Reconciliation Barometer, based on 2,006 interviews, reveals a nation marked by democratic resilience but showing deep public fragility. Despite a peaceful transition to multi-party coalition governance after the 2024 elections, public trust in political leaders and institutions remains low. Social cohesion indicators suggest that national identity remains strong, yet interpersonal trust is low, particularly among South Africans across racial and linguistic groups.

ANC's Sibisi emphasised South Africa's constitutional democracy, grounded in equality, dignity, and non-racialism, and condemned attempts to pit communities against one another. He also noted India's prominent role in the fight against apartheid. India was the first country to break trade ties with South Africa in 1946, supporting the passive resistance campaign and calling for international sanctions against apartheid.

Starting in the 1860s, Indian labourers were brought to South Africa to work on farms, like this group of Indian women at a sugar plantation in the erstwhile Natal province in 1939

Historical Context

The Indian community's arrival in South Africa dates to 1860, when the British brought indentured labour to work on sugarcane plantations. Later, "passenger" Indians arrived as traders. Over generations, Indians have shaped South African culture, politics, and cuisine, maintaining diverse religious and linguistic identities. During apartheid, Indians were classified as a separate racial group, facing discrimination but with a legal standing distinct from Black Africans. The community played a significant role in the anti-apartheid struggle, with figures like Ahmed Kathrada, Yusuf Dadoo, and Mahatma Gandhi standing out.



Democracy in 1994 brought hopes of a "rainbow nation", with constitutional guarantees of equality and non-racialism. Indians, alongside other communities, contributed to nation-building and the liberation struggle. However, the legacy of apartheid — segregation, suspicion, and structural inequality — remains deeply embedded.

When Nelson Mandela formed South Africa's first democratic govt, five individuals of Indian descent were appointed to his cabinet, reflecting a commitment to diversity and recognising the community's contributions. This number fluctuated under subsequent presidents, with only a deputy minister in the current ANC-led Govt of National Unity.

File photo of Indian dancers at a cultural programme in Durban in 2024

Willie Cele Photos

Community Voices

Racism in South Africa has not disappeared after 30 years of democracy, notes Sham Maharaj, a respected voice in Phoenix, north of Durban. Racism, he feels, exists among all races, and minority communities are increasingly victims of hate speech and racism. Pointing to the Indian community's role in the liberation struggle and nation-building, he said tribal politics, nationalist parties, and corruption had led many to lose faith in the country's leadership even as he called for participation in democracy to rebuild the nation.

Shaneen Thakur-Rajhansi of Minority Front, a political party, said that while overt racism has been outlawed, latent prejudice persists and has worsened in the last decade. Social media has amplified racism, and politicians often play the race card during elections. Thakur-Rajhansi says Indians — though politically and economically marginalised — are integral to South Africa's democracy.

Ela Gandhi, granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi, says comments against the Indian community signal a disturbing trend of prejudice based on ethnicity, class, and religion

— **Ela Gandhi**, Peace activist and Mahatma Gandhi's granddaughter

I struggle when people ask me to choose between being Indian first or South African first. My birth itself shows that I'm both. South Africa gave me life, but India gave me heritage

— **Paige-Emma Marugan**, School student

the Indian community signal a disturbing trend of prejudice based on ethnicity, class, and religion. She advocates self-reflection, empathy and bridge-building across groups, to realise the dream of a rainbow nation.

ANC member Ravin Singh highlights South Africa's constitutional protection and regards affirmative action and Black economic empowerment as forms of positive discrimination intended to address historical injustice. He acknowledges legitimate concerns about empowerment but stresses the need for deliberate intervention to overcome entrenched power structures. Singh notes that South Africa remains deeply unequal, thereby making social cohesion difficult, but points to everyday coexistence and the enduring spirit of ubuntu in South African philosophical concept meaning "humanity towards others") and seen across communities.

Social Cohesion, Role Of Youth

Singh believes there is greater social cohesion among younger South Africans, who do not carry the same historical baggage as older generations. While prejudice persists, it is important to distinguish between latent prejudice and open, explicit racism. Young Black professionals, including Indians and Coloureds (multiracial people), are actively involved in addressing community challenges and directly confronting prejudice, he says.

Neeshan Balton, executive director of the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation, says racism against any community is an assault on democracy and emphasised the long-standing contributions of Indian South Africans to the struggle against apartheid and the building of democracy.

Publisher Nirode Reundas, a former ANC official, notes that Indians played a pivotal role in the anti-apartheid struggle, recognised by Mandela's first cabinet. He argues that race relations have worsened, with the ANC mired in tribalism.

Identity And Belonging

Perhaps the answer for Indian South Africans lies not in choosing one or the other, but embracing both aspects of their heritage. Paige-Emma Marugan, a teenage schoolgirl of Indian descent in Johannesburg, provides a personal perspective. "South Africa", she says, "is where I was born. My identity is layered — Indian roots, South African soil, and people from different backgrounds guiding me into the world. That's why I struggle when people ask me to choose between being Indian first or South African first. My birth itself shows that I'm both. South Africa gave me life, but India gave me heritage. One is the ground I stand on, the other is the history I carry. Together, they make me whole. If I try to separate them, I lose something important. So, I don't choose. I blend. I balance. I carry all of it proudly. And what makes me whole is the mix of all these in my South African melting-pot life — my Christian faith, and my Indian heritage, living side by side within me. That's who I am."

The writer is head of Higher Education Media Services in Johannesburg

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Haldwani Rudrapur Cluster SWM Society (HRCSWMS)
(Nagar Nigam Haldwani - Kathgodam)

Reference No. 113 Date 18/02/2026

E-Tender Notice

Request for Proposal (RFP) are invited for Processing and Management of Municipal Solid Waste at Haldwani Distt-Nainital" from the eligible Consortium/developers/Agencies/ Firms through online portal http://uktenders.gov.in. Details/RFP & Schedule of Bidding Process can also be downloaded from this portal from 21/02/2026.

(Paritosh Verma)
Member Secretary
Nagar Ayukta

(Gajraj Singh Bisht)
Honourable Chairman/
Mayor

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE NO.8402026 Dated: 16.02.2026

E-Tender Notice

Sr. DSTE/North Central Railway, Agra acting for and on behalf of the President of India invites "Open Tender" through Online only (E-Tendering) for the following work:

E-TENDER NO.: AGRA-ST-2026-13	Approx. Cost of work : ₹ 3,20,83,968.48

Name of work : Comprehensive Annual maintenance Contract of Firewacher Make Multi Section Digital Axle Counters ASC-8HA, 8HA-JJ, JJ-MIA, MIA-DHO (ASC-DHO Section) of Agra Division for a period of three years.

Tender closing date: 12.03.2026

For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railway Website www.ireps.gov.in. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids through web portal www.ireps.gov.in up to 15.00 hrs on above mentioned date. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. 356(26/DG)

North central railway @NCRMDB www.northcentralrailways.gov.in

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NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-Tendering Notice No.: 2026-Feb-02 Dated: 16.02.2026

E-TENDER NOTICE

Divisional Railway Manager (Engineering), N. C. Rly Agra for and on behalf of the President of India invites "Open Tender" through On-Line only (E-Tendering) for the following works. The details of the tender are as under:-

S.No.: 1	Tender No.: 2026-Feb-02-01	Approx. Cost (Rs.): ₹ 79,62,245.16

Description of work: Provision of 56 rooms (130 beds) at NDLS for decongestion at MSRR NDLS due to existing dormitory rooms.

S.No.: 2	Tender No.: 2026-Feb-02-02	Approx. Cost (Rs.): ₹ 31,94,680.56

Description of work: Provision of extension of Running Room (16 rooms, 32 Beds) in Mathura Jn station.

S.No.: 3	Tender No.: 2026-Feb-02-03	Approx. Cost (Rs.): ₹ 13,25,755.60

Description of work: Construction of 40 bed RPF barrack at New Delhi under Agra Division/NCR.

For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways website "www.ireps.gov.in". Tenders can only be submitted through web portal "www.ireps.gov.in" up to 15.00 hrs on 09.03.2026. 357(26 (A)

North central railway @NCRMDB www.northcentralrailways.gov.in

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CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF ROAD TRANSPORT
Post Box No 1867, Shoulri, Pune-25. PH: 020-67345300

TENDER NOTICE

CIRT, Pune invites tenders from reputed and experienced firms for the following:

Design, Development & Maintenance of Payroll Software

Last date for submission of Tender: **11th March 2026 at 1400 Hrs**

Interested firms are requested to view and download detailed tender document from our website **www.cirtindia.com**

राष्ट्रीय औषधीय शिक्षा एवं अनुसंधान संस्थान (नाइपर)–हाजीपुर
National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER)- HAJIPUR
औषध विभाग / Department of Pharmaceuticals
रसायन एवं उर्वरक मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार / Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers, Govt. of India
Dist. : Vaishali, State : Bihar, India, PIN : 844102, Website : www.niperhajipur.ac.in

Employment Notification No:NIPER-HJP/Estt./Recruitt./Ph-VII/2026/126, Date : 19/02/2026

National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER) Hajipur is an Institute of National Importance established by an Act of Parliament 2007 under the aegis of the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers, Government of India.
Online Applications are invited from the eligible and suitable Indian Nationals for the Teaching and Non-Teaching posts on a direct recruitment/deputation basis through open competition on an all-India basis.
The commencement and last date for submission of online/ hard copy of applications are as under :

Date of Commencement of Online Application	19th February 2026 (Thursday)
Last date of receipt of Online Application & Payment of Fees	18th March 2026 (Wednesday) up to 11:59 PM
Last date of receipt of hard copy of successfully submitted online application form along with all enclosures at NIPER-Hajipur	2nd April 2026 (Thursday) up to 4:00 PM

For further details, please visit our website www.niperhajipur.ac.in

LINK FOR SUBMISSION OF ONLINE APPLICATION

Teaching Posts :	Non-Teaching Posts :
https://niperhajipurrec.samarth.edu.in/	https://niperhajipurnt.samarth.edu.in

For further details and any query, email us : recruitment@niperhajipur.ac.in
Date : 19th February 2026 Registrar (I/C)

Central Electricity Regulatory Commission
6th, 7th & 8th Floor, Tower-B, World Trade Centre, Nauroji Nagar, New Delhi-110029

Petition No. 824/TL/2025 Dated: 16.2.2026

NOTICE UNDER CLAUSE (a) OF SUB-SECTION (5) OF SECTION 15 OF THE ELECTRICITY ACT, 2003

An application under Sections 14, 15 and 79(1)(e) of the Electricity Act, 2003 (the Act) has been made by **Angul Sundargarh Transmission Limited**, Urjanidhi, 1st Floor, 1, Barakhamba Lane, Connaught Place, Central Delhi, New Delhi – 110001 to establish the Inter-State transmission system for the "Eastern Region Generation Scheme-I (ERGS-I)" (hereinafter referred to as "the Project") on a Build, Own, Operate and Transfer Basis consisting of the following elements:

Sl. No.	Name of Transmission Element	SCOD in months from the Effective Date
1.	LILO of both circuits of Angul – Sundargarh (Jharsuguda) 765 kV 2xS/c lines at NLC-Talabira generation switchyard	28.3.2028

Note:

NLC India Ltd. shall provide following at 765 kV level its Talabira generation switchyard:

a. 2 no. 765 kV GIS line bays with PIR in different diameters for termination of Talabira - Sundargarh (Jharsuguda) 765 kV D/c line.
b. 2 no. of 765kV GIS line bays with PIR in different diameters for termination of Talabira – Angul 765 kV D/c line, each with 765 kV, 1x240 MVAr (3x80 MVAr single phase units) switchable line reactor along with 400 ohm NGR (with NGR bypass arrangement). There shall be total 7x80MVAr single phase units against 2x240 MVAr line reactors and the 7th 1-phase unit shall be kept as hot stand by. The spare 1-phase shunt reactor unit shall be placed and connected in such a way that the spare unit can be utilized without its physical movement. Further, the connection arrangement of switchable line reactors shall be such that it can be used as line reactor as well as bus reactor with suitable NGR bypass arrangement.
c. The line lengths mentioned above are approximate as the exact length shall be obtained after the detailed survey."

1. The Central Transmission Utility of India Limited, vide its letter dated 27.8.2025, has recommended for the grant of a transmission licence to the applicant to establish the proposed transmission system.
2. Based on the material available on the record, the Commission vide order dated 13.2.2026 in Petition No. 824/TL/2025, has proposed to issue a transmission licence to the applicant for the establishment of the transmission scheme as noted in para 1 above.
4. A copy of the application, along with its annexures and enclosures, made by the applicant for the grant of an inter-State transmission licence to **Angul Sundargarh Transmission Limited**, before the Commission can be accessed at the www.ulcindia.com/ or inspected by any person in the Commission's office by following the laid down procedure.
5. Notice is hereby given in pursuance of clause (a) of sub-section (5) of Section 15 of the Act that suggestions or objections, if any, to the Commission's proposal to grant a transmission licence to the applicant, as aforesaid, be sent to the undersigned by **24.2.2026** at the above noted address. The suggestions or objections received after the specified date shall not be considered.
6. The application shall be taken up for the further hearing by the Commission on **26.2.2026**. Any person who files suggestions or objections may in his/her discretion attend the hearing, for which no TA/DA shall be paid by the Commission.

Sd/-
(Harpreet Singh Pruthi)
Secretary

11001/04/2026
DHARANIDHAR UNIVERSITY, KENDUJHAR-758001
No. 750 /DU/KUSTT. /2026 Date: 13.02.2026

EMPLOYMENT NOTICE

Dharanidhar University is seeking applications from Indian citizens having eligibility as per the UGC Notification, New Delhi, dated 4th July 2018, for appointment to the posts of Assistant Professor/ Associate Professor / Professor against regular sanctioned posts in the mentioned departments: (Anthropology (Arts), Botany, Chemistry, Commerce, Economics, Education, English, Geology, History, Material Sciences, Mathematics, Odia, Philosophy, Physics, Political Science, Sanskrit, Sociology, Zoology, Computer Science & B.Ed) as per letter No. 5322/HE, Dated 31.01.2026 of Govt. of Odisha department of Higher Education, Bhubaneswar. The online application form and department-wise reservation details will be made available on the University website from 20th February 2026 onwards. Relaxation in the minimum 50% marks at the Master's degree level and reservation will be applicable as per Government of India / State govt. norms. For details of the terms and conditions, guidelines for applying etc. Please visit the University website (https://dharaniversity.ac.in). Interested Candidates may go through the website for eligibility, screening, selection criteria, application form etc. To apply online, we advise the candidates to download the application form from the website, fill it up and keep the required documents ready. It will help the candidates to fill up the form online seamlessly

Application open date: 20-02-2026 (25 February, 2026)
Application closing date: 10-04-2026 (10 April, 2026)
NB: For details and update see the University website: https://dharaniversity.ac.in

Sd/-
Registrar
Dharanidhar University, Kendujhar
DIPR-1100111120/25-26/8001

भारतीय अंतरिक्ष विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान
Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology
(वि. अ. अधीन अधिसूचित एवं स्वायत्त संस्थान / Notified and Autonomous Institute under Department of Space, Govt. of India)
वलियमला, तिरुवनन्तपुरम-695 547, केरल
Valiamala, Thiruvananthapuram-695 547, Kerala

केंद्रीय सरकार कर्मचारियों को स्नातकोत्तर कार्यक्रम (प्रायोजित) में प्रवेश - 2026

ADMISSION TO PG PROGRAMME (SPONSORED) FOR CENTRAL GOVT. EMPLOYEES - 2026

आवेदन प्रक्रिया केवल ऑनलाइन रूप से ही की जाएगी
Application process will be done ONLINE only

केंद्रीय सरकार कर्मचारियों को स्नातकोत्तर कार्यक्रम (प्रायोजित) में प्रवेश के लिए सूचना नीचे दी गई वेबसाइट पर उपलब्ध है।
Notification for admission to PG programme (Sponsored) for Central Govt. Employees - 2026
https://admission.iist.ac.in
आवेदन भरने की अंतिम तिथि
Last date to apply: 17th March 2026
जानकारी के लिए / For Queries: admissions@iist.ac.in
संपर्क सूत्र / Contact 0471-2568477/ 610 (on working days 0900 - 1700 hrs)
स्कैन करें / Scan Here
डीन (शैक्षणिक) / Dean (Academics)

INDICATIVE NOTIFICATION

RECRUITMENT AGAINST SPORTS QUOTA (Open Advertisement) in various pay levels in Northeast Frontier Railway for the year 2025-26 (Part-2)

EMPLOYMENT NOTICE NO. 01/2026

Northeast Frontier Railway invites ONLINE applications from eligible sportspersons who are citizens of India, for filling up 09 posts [Level-2/3=05 posts and Level-1=04 posts] for the year 2025-26 against the sports disciplines of Archery, Athletics (High Jump), Boxing, Cricket & Golf.

Opening date of application : 20-02-2026
Closing date of application : 10-03-2026

Applicant can view detailed notification by visiting website: **www.nfr.indianrailways.gov.in ⇨ General Info ⇨ Recuitment Notification (Sports, Scouts & Guides and Cultural) ⇨ RECUITMENT AGAINST SPORTS QUOTA ⇨ SPORTS QUOTA RECRUITMENT 2025-26 (Part-2).**

Candidates can also submit online application directly by visiting website:- **https://www.nfr-recruitment.in.**

General Manager (P), Maligaon, Guwahati
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

TIMES GLOBAL

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2026

LOVE IS THE ABSENCE OF JUDGMENT
— DALAI LAMA XIV

SHIA LABEOUF ARRESTED, CHARGED WITH 2 COUNTS OF SIMPLE BATTERY AFTER ASSAULTING 2 IN NEW ORLEANS

DANIEL RADCLIFFE TELLS MEDIA NOT TO ASK CAST OF 'HARRY POTTER' SERIES ABOUT ORIGINAL MOVIE ACTORS: 'JUST LET THEM GET ON'

Tarique hints at tough road ahead as 'eco battered by graft, misrule'

Govt Sets 180-Day Priority Plan, To Focus On Inflation, Law And Order

Ahsan Tasnim

NEW ERA: PM Tarique Rahman

Dhaka: Tarique Rahman, in his maiden speech after becoming Bangladesh PM, outlined his govt's priorities, stressing on improving the law and order situation and turning the country into a safe land for people of all faiths, regardless of party affiliation, religion, or ethnicity. He said, "As the head of the govt, I would like to draw the attention of the people of the country to one important matter — whether you voted for BNP, did not vote for it, or did not vote at all, you all have equal rights to this govt."

His remarks that were seen as an outreach to members of Bangladesh's largest Islamist party Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) who screamed fraud after finishing — despite with increased support — far behind BNP, and also possibly supporters of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League which was debarred from elections.

The address also read like an indictment of the former Muhammad Yunus-led interim govt, with Tarique emphasising that the new govt has begun its journey amid a fragile economy battered by corruption and misrule during, what he described, as a period of fascism, along with weak governance structures and a deteriorating law-and-order situation. "Restoring peace and security in the minds of the people remains the top priority. The law-and-order situation and turning the country into a safe land for people of all faiths, regardless of party, opinion, religion, or ethnicity. He said, "As the head of the govt, I would like to draw the attention of the people of the country to one important matter — whether you voted for BNP, did not vote for it, or did not vote at all, you all have equal rights to this govt."

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In his address, he did not elaborate on his foreign policy. He, however, at the beginning of his speech said that "in a Bangladesh freed from subservience, a new govt accountable to the people through their votes has begun its journey".

Earlier on Wednesday, Tarique chaired the first meeting of the cabinet, which set a 180-day priority plan, a departure from the norm of 100-day plans, with focus on controlling commodity prices, maintaining law and order, stabilising supply chains, and ensuring uninterrupted gas and electricity supply. Home minister Salahuddin Ahmed was quoted as saying by the Daily Star newspaper.

With PTI inputs

Will seek respectful relations with neighbours: B'desh FM

Ahsan Tasnim

FM Khalilur Rahman

Dhaka: Bangladesh will seek respectful, mutually beneficial relations with all nations, particularly its neighbours, grounded in sovereign equality and shared interests, the new Tarique Rahman-led BNP govt said Wednesday, indicating its intention for a reassessment of Bangladesh-India relations, strained during the 18-month tenure of the Muhammad Yunus-led interim govt.

Newly appointed foreign minister Khalilur Rahman announced that "Bangladesh First" would serve as the central organising principle of the country's foreign policy. Under this framework, he said, "we aim at maintaining good relations with all countries, especially our neighbours, based on respect and mutual benefit." "There will be comprehensive reassessment of Bangladesh's external engagement, anchored in sovereign equality, non-interference in internal affairs, national dignity and honour, and reciprocity," he told reporters.

"The govt's commitment is to a balanced and pragmatic engagement and where complexities or stagnation exist, efforts will continue to resolve obstacles and normalise ties," Khalilur said — as the BNP has already indicated that though the new govt will not stop seeking former PM Sheikh Hasina's extradition from New Delhi, the "issue" will not be a roadblock. "Our foreign policy will be guided exclusively by national interest," he added. "It will not be shaped by partisan considerations."

"Foreign policy is very serious matter," Khalilur said, adding that "the goal is to build a foreign policy that reflects the will and aspirations of the people of Bangladesh and pledges a strategy rooted in national interest and constructive global engagement".

Meanwhile, home minister Salahuddin Ahmed, after the first meeting of the Tarique-led cabinet, said the days of "mob culture is over" in Bangladesh. Ahmed said, "Mob culture is over in Bangladesh. Mob culture cannot be encouraged in any way." He said there will be demands but these demands must be raised through proper processes and forums. Democratic culture will continue, the minister said.

No breakthrough in Ukraine talks; Zelensky: Russia delaying process

Geneva: The latest US-brokered talks between envoys from Moscow and Kyiv over Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine ended Wednesday with no sign of a breakthrough and with both sides saying the talks were "difficult," as the war's fourth anniversary approaches next week.

The negotiations in Switzerland were the third round of direct talks organised by the US, after meetings earlier this year in Abu Dhabi that officials described as constructive but which also made no major headway. Expectations for significant progress in Geneva were low. "The negotiations were not easy," Ukrainian President **Volodymyr Zelensky** said after the talks broke up and he spoke briefly by phone from Kyiv with his negotiating team.

He earlier accused Russia of "trying to drag out negotiations" while it presses on with its invasion. Despite that, some progress was made on military issues although political differences remain deep, including over the future of land in eastern Ukraine that is occupied by the Russian army and that Russian President Vladimir Putin wants to keep, Zelensky said.

The head of the Russian delegation, Putin adviser Vladimir Medinsky, said the two days of talks in Geneva "were difficult but business-like." Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said it's "too early" to speak about the outcome of the talks. Both sides said a new round of talks is set to take place. AP

Eye on dominance in sea, China making nuke subs faster than US: Report

Beijing: China has ramped up its production of nuclear-powered submarines over the past five years to the point where it is launching subs faster than the US, threatening to negate a sea-power advantage that has long belonged to Washington, according to a think tank report.

CATCHING UP

The build-up in the People's Liberation Army Navy's nuclear-powered submarine includes both ballistic-missile and attack subs, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) said.

During 2021-2025, China's submarine building surpassed that of the US in both numbers of subs launched (10 to 7 and tonnage 79,000 to 55,500, CNN said, quoting the report. It's a stark turnaround from the 2016 to 2020 period, when China only added three subs to the US Navy's seven, according to the report. The numbers represent subs launched but not necessarily completed and added to the active-duty fleet.

As of early 2025, China had 12 active nuclear-powered submarines, six ballistic-missile boats and six guided-missile or attack boats, according to the report. US had 65 total subs, with 51 of these being ballistic-missile boats. China also maintains a large overseas non-nuclear-powered submarine fleet, with 46 boats, according to the report. The US has zero conventionally powered subs, which "unlike nuclear-powered subs "need to refuel regularly" AP

China tightens curbs on officials with family overseas, says report

China has tightened restrictions on officials and executives at govt bodies and state-owned enterprises who have family members overseas over the last year, the South China Morning Post reported on Thursday, citing sources, as China steps up its long-term drive to tackle graft. Beijing's "high-pressure campaign" in recent years has led to many high-profile investigations. REUTERS

WORLD DIGEST

Zuckerberg to testify at youth addiction trial

Meta Platforms CEO and Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg was expected to be questioned for the first time in a US court on Wednesday about Instagram's effect on the mental health of young users, as a landmark trial over youth social media addiction continues. While Zuckerberg has previously testified on the subject before Congress, the stakes are higher at the jury trial in Los Angeles, California. Meta may have to pay damages if it loses the case.

UK police forces assess Epstein file allegations

British police forces are working together to assess potential crimes revealed in documents from the US DoJ's investigation into Jeffrey Epstein, including allegations of wrongdoing by the former Prince Andrew. The National Police Chiefs' Council said on Wednesday that it had set up a national coordination group to support forces in the matter. They are looking into issues ranging from concerns that Epstein's private jet may have been used in sex trafficking to claims that Andrew sent confidential reports to the financier when he was UK international trade envoy.

In New Zealand, a judge wrestles with AI-assisted apology

Ephrat Livni

A judge in New Zealand who discovered last week that apology letters from a defendant in an arson case had been written with the help of artificial intelligence raised questions about the sincerity of her sentiments.

"The issue of remorse is interesting," said the judge, Tom Gilbert, of the district court in Christchurch, as he mulled the punishment of a woman who had pleaded guilty to arson and other charges. Remorse can be a mitigating factor in sentencing. Her letters to the victims and the court were nicely written, the judge said. "Out of curiosity I punched into two AI tools 'draft me a letter for a judge expressing remorse,' "the judge said, according to a transcript of the sentencing hearing. "It became immediately apparent that these were two AI-generated letters, albeit with tweaks around the edges."

Judge Gilbert said he was not criticising the defendant's use of AI. "But certainly when one is considering the genuineness of an individual's remorse, simply producing a computer-generated letter does not really take me anywhere as far as I am concerned," he said, according to the transcript.

The judge was not alone in wrestling with the question of authenticity in AI-assisted writing. Increasingly, people are outsourcing many tasks to machines, including writing apologies, eulogies and wedding vows inviting the ire of some of their fellow humans.

Getty Images/iStock for representation

IS THE REMORSE REAL OR NOT?

Social scientists say the questions raised by use of these tools go beyond etiquette. "It's a mirror into who we are and what we care about as humans," Jim Everett, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Kent in Britain, said about the case.

Everett worked on a series of recent studies on the perception of AI use and users. Across the six studies Everett worked on, 4,000 participants were asked about 20 tasks. The aim was to understand how people perceive those who use AI. "AI is a tool for efficiency, and it can be helpful, but it also typically involves, and signals, reduced effort," Everett said. But the use of such tools acts as a kind of proxy for character traits, the researchers found. The findings suggest that people generally perceived those using AI as lazier, less competent and less trustworthy, and their work as less meaningful.

The situation in the New Zealand court was a real-life test of the perceptions that the researchers sought to identify. "An AI could be perfectly trained on all apologies but one might still think that a specific apology it then generates in a new instance is not authentic because it does not come from the kind of processes deemed important in an apology: a personal recollection of the wrong, a commitment to change," the study said.

Judge Gilbert said he was willing to give the defendant some credit for genuine remorse. But he granted only a 5% reduction in the sentence. He sentenced the defendant to 27 months in prison. NYT

Trump family business files for trademark rights on any airports using prez's name

New York: The Trump family company has filed to trademark the use of the president's name on airports but says it doesn't plan on charging a fee at least for a proposed renaming of one near his Florida home.

Applications filed by the Trump Organization with the federal trademark office are seeking exclusive rights to use the president's name on airports and discussed airport renaming, "if and when" such properties are found there, from buses shuttling passengers to umbrellas and travel bags to flight suits.

The filings come amid debate in Florida over a state bill to name the Palm Beach airport after Trump and a dispute over funding of a tunnel between New York and New Jersey that is tied up with proposals that both it and Dulles International Airport in Virginia bear his name.

The Trump Organization said that the applications were triggered by the Florida bill and that it didn't seek any profit — only protection against "bad actors" given that the Trump name is the "most infringed trademark in the world."

"To be clear, the president and his family will not receive any royalty, licensing fee, or financial consideration whatsoever from the proposed airport renaming," the company said it in a statement, referring to what is now called the Palm Beach International Airport near Trump's Mar-a-Lago club. The company didn't respond when asked if it would charge royalties for the use of the name at other airports in the future, or merchandise listed for protection in the filings.

Josh Gerben, a trademark lawyer who uncovered the filings over the weekend, said the applications were the first of their kind he's ever seen.

"While presidents and public officials have had landmarks named in their honour, a sitting president's private company has never in the history of the United States sought trademark rights in advance of such naming," Gerben wrote on his blog. "These are trademark filings that are completely unprecedented."

Another break with the past: Presidents usually have to wait for years after they've left office to get an airport named after them — or die.

Bill Clinton had to wait 11 years, Ronald Reagan nine. For Gerald Ford it took 22 years. JFK was quickest — just one month after his assassination. The Trump company's claim that it is the most infringed trademark in the world could not be quickly confirmed. AP

Indian-origin man cleared after 43yrs in jail for murder denied bail in deportation fight

Philadelphia: An Indian-origin man who spent 43 years in prison before his murder conviction was overturned — only to be taken straight into immigration custody — was denied bail on Tuesday while he fights deportation. Subramanyam Vedam, 64, will remain in custody while he appeals a 1999 deportation order. The Board of Immigration Appeals agreed this month to hear his appeal based on what it called exceptional circumstances.

Subramanyam Vedam

The Trump administration had initially pursued a quick deportation and moved Vedam to a detention centre in Louisiana last fall, before two separate courts intervened.

Vedam's lawyer argued on Tuesday that he would have likely been spared deportation and become a citizen if not for the murder case, given immigration laws in place at the time. Vedam would have left prison on a drug charge by 1982, lawyer Ava Benach said. "It was delivery of LSD on a very small scale. This is not importing tonnes of cocaine," Benach said. "He is not a danger to the community. We are talking about offences that occurred over 40 years ago."

In Aug, a Pennsylvania judge threw out Vedam's murder conviction in the 1980 death of a college friend, based on ballistics evidence that prosecutors hadn't disclosed during his two trials. Supporters listening in remotely to the bail hearing included a Centre County prosecutor and the mayor of State College, where Vedam's late father was a professor at Penn State's University Branch said.

Immigration Judge Tamar Wilson, sitting in Elizabeth, New Jersey, said she believes detention to be mandatory given the felony drug conviction. Alternatively, she agreed with department of homeland security officials who said he remains a safety risk. "The fact he's been a 'model prisoner' does not suggest that out in the general public he's going to be safe," Wilson said. It's not yet clear whether Wilson or another judge will hear the merits of the deportation case. No hearings have yet been scheduled.

"Salvia is nothing if not resilient, and we've received tremendous the example he sets for us by focusing on the next step in his fight for freedom. We continue to believe his immigration case is strong...," said his sister, Saraswathi. Vedam had come to the US legally from India when he was 9 months old. AP

Canada's tightening of int'l student inflows results in a sharp decline

Lubna Kably | TNN

Canada is witnessing a sharp slowdown in new international student arrivals, Ottawa's measures to curb temporary residents (including students) and ease pressure on housing, infrastructure and public services, is showing results according to the recent data released by the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). As against 2.9 lakh new student arrivals in 2024, the number dropped sharply to Rs. 1.1 lakh – a decline of about 61%.

IRCC points out that if the monthly data is analysed, Aug and Dec show a spike, this is because most study permits are issued before the start of the fall and winter semester. The drop is starkly visible. Dec 2025, saw new student arrivals of a mere 9,800 as opposed to 29,835 in Dec 2024. Canada introduced an annual cap on international student study permits in 2024 and later announced further restrictions for 2025 and 2026 as part of its long-term immigration plan.

Last Nov, when Canada unveiled its new Immigration Levels Plan for 2026-2028 it sharply cut back the number of temporary residents—especially international students. To illustrate, the Immigration levels plan unveiled last year (2025-2027) had projected an intake of 3 lakh students for 2026, this is now down to 1.5 lakh and will marginally decline over the next two years.

Matthew McDonald, Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant, had told TOI, "The big surprise is a 50% cut to international students — from the projection of 3 lakh to 1.5 lakh in 2026. At first glance, the reduction may not seem significant, as we do not anticipate more than 1.5 lakh study permit approvals in 2026. However, the lower target will also reduce the number of admitted future refugees, colleges and universities can make, putting pressure on Canada's international education sector."

In addition, over the past few years, IRCC also strengthened the International Student Programme by making acceptance-letter verification mandatory, increasing financial proof requirements for applicants from Canadian dollars 10,000 to 20,635 and tightening oversight to prevent fraud.

IRCC data from earlier issued study permits shows India remains by far the largest source country, with 3.2 lakh study permits issued to Indian residents in 2023. The policy shift has impacted Indian aspirants. However, IRCC points out that the country's immigration system is evolving to support long-term economic growth while achieving sustainable immigration levels.

Flawless asphalt, empty homes: A 300-mile drive through Afghanistan

Elian Peltier

Kandahar: Highway 1 was once among the most dangerous, damaged arteries in Afghanistan. But on a recent 300-mile road trip between Afghanistan's two largest cities, NYT journalists only encountered order and security — and not a single pothole. Since the Taliban returned to power in 2021, they have worked to replace the violence that defined this highway, and the country, with strengthened security and administration. Once littered with bomb craters and trenches dug by trucks, the road is now smooth enough for travellers to nap while riding through the plains of Afghanistan's east.

On a recent evening, we watched a man training his pigeons as the sun set. Bus and truck drivers queued at gas stations before stopping for a bite of lamb kebab. Boys cycled past solar-panel-covered religious schools, some of them nested in former military outposts.

This is the Afghanistan that the Taliban govt has rebuilt over the past 4 years, after the US's withdrawal. It is what the Taliban want the world to see as they try to attract foreign investment and recognition. The Afghan economy grew by 4.3% last year, according to the World Bank, up from 2.5% in 2024. "All the heavy weapons and the money of the previous govt didn't accomplish much," said Iqbal Noori, the owner of a mobile phone shop in Kandahar.

Highway 1, the road linking Kabul and Kandahar, in Ghazni Province

Highway 1 was once the showpiece of the US reconstruction effort in Afghanistan. But it also became a symbol of squandered billions in Western aid. In 2016, an audit by the special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction found that 95% of the paved roads had been damaged or destroyed. Amid frequent fighting, the 300-mile trip between Kabul and Kandahar could stretch to 18 hours. Travellers can now complete the journey in eight.

In the evening, we stopped at a roadside stall where Nasibullah Khaksar sold dry fruits. Growing up next to Highway 1 meant a life of constant interruption. "The sight of a Taliban patrol was a sign that fighting would start soon," he said. Now, Khaksar said, he can ride his motorcycle at night without fear, and he never locks his shop.

However, women and girls were all but invisible on the journey save for a few glimpsed in the back of passing trucks and buses. The Taliban have effectively erased them from public life. The Afghan economy may be losing $1.4 billion every year because of it, according to World Bank estimates.

The men we encountered at every stop shared concerns about their livelihoods. Truck drivers and fruit sellers, welders and butchers all said that better security was welcome but not enough. "The youth are jobless. We need factories," said Noor Agha Rahmani, a carpenter in Ghazni province.

As we approached Kabul, military bases in ruins lined the route. So did rows of abandoned houses. The war is over, but in many places, those who remain said the silence of peace was paired with the quiet of neglect. "If you don't know anyone in the higher ranks, you're not getting anything," said Gul Rahman Ilimayar, a former Taliban fighter. NYT

DAILY PLANET

Reuters

Fireworks go off over the Victoria Harbour on the second day of the Lunar Year of the Horse, in Hong Kong, on Wednesday

Captured: A rare footage of a shark in Antarctica

A languishing barrel of a shark cruising languidly over a barren seabed far too deep for the sun's rays to illuminate was an unexpected sight. Many experts had thought sharks didn't exist in the frigid waters of Antarctica before this sleeper shark lumbered warily and briefly into the spotlight of a video camera, researcher Alan Jamieson said this week. The shark, filmed in Jan 2025, was a substantial specimen with an estimated length of between 10 and 13 feet. "We went down there not expecting to see sharks because there's a general rule of thumb that you don't get sharks in Antarctica," Jamieson said. "And it's not even a little one either. It's a bank of a shark. These things are tanks," he added. The shark was 1,688 feet deep where the water temperature was a near-freezing 1.27°C. Jamieson said he could find no record of another shark found in the Antarctic Ocean.

Trunk snapped off famed Bernini statue in Rome

A marble elephant designed by Baroque master Gian Lorenzo Bernini has been damaged, with its left tusk found snapped off and lying at the base of the monument in the heart of Rome, authorities said. The damage was uncovered on Monday night and police said they would review video footage from Piazza della Minerva to determine whether the task was vandalised or simply fell off following weeks of heavy rains. It is not the first time the sculpture, popularly known as the Elefantino (little elephant), has been damaged. In Nov 2016, the tip of the same tusk was similarly found broken off. The piece was reattached during restoration work. The sculpture, created in 1667, stands a short distance from the Pantheon.

"THE NON-SELECTION OF STEVE SMITH IN THE AUSTRALIA SQUAD IS THE MOST BAFFLING NON-SELECTION I CAN THINK OF. THEY GOT IT COMPLETELY WRONG. IT IS AN INSULT TO SMITH."
—Mark Waugh, FORMER AUSTRALIA BATTER

Allrounder's 31-Ball 66 Powers India To 17-Run Win Against Netherlands; Chakravarthy Takes 3/14

DUBE UNLEASHED!

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Ahmedabad: Abhishek Sharma was out for his third consecutive duck but showing yet again how dangerous and impactful he can be, Shivam Dube struck a career-best 66 off just 31 balls to star in India's 17-run win over the Netherlands here on Wednesday.

The defending champions and co-hosts rounded off the league stage by winning all their four matches and topping Group A. They now take a well-earned breather for the next three days before they take on South Africa at the same venue in their first Super 8s match.

12 India have extended their record in T20 World Cup with their twelfth triumph in succession between June 5, 2024 and Feb 18, 2026.

With an aim to help the bowlers get used to defending a total in dewy conditions in the Super 8s, India decided to bat first in the inconsequential tie. Dube's power-packed half-century — his first in T20 World Cups — lifted India to a daunting 193-8 after they struggled initially against Dutch spinner Aryan Dutt, who bowled brilliantly to finish with 2-19 in four overs.

Varun Chakravarthy then spun some of his own magic, taking 3-14 in three overs, but a spirited Dutch team did well to respond with 176-7.

India dropped a few catches on the night but the biggest worry would be the terrible run of Abhishek, who fell for his fifth duck of the year.

Ishan Kishan (18; 7b, 22m), 1x6), Tilak Varma (31; 27b, 3x4, 1x6) and skipper Suryakumar Yadav (34; 28b, 2x4, 1x6) were all dismissed when well set.

When 'SKY' was caught at fine leg off Logan van Beek (3-66 in four overs), India were literally crawling at 110/4 in the 14th over. However, allrounders Hardik Pandya (30; 21b, 3x6) and Dube then put on 38 in just 35 balls for the fifth wicket to give the tournament co-hosts some much needed momentum in the second half of the innings.

With Dube, who reached his fifty off 35 balls, and Pandya tonking nine sixes between them, India plundered 35 in the last five overs, giving plenty of entertainment to the 68,000-strong crowd.

In the penultimate over, the Dube-Pandya pair took 21 off Kyle Klein as Pandya smoked the medium-pacer for two sixes and Dube took a four off him.

Overall, India's batters struck 13 sixes on the night. Dube, who employs his long levers, timing and raw power to send the ball into orbit if pitched in his arc, had also produced cameos of 23 (16b) and 27 (17 balls) against Namibia and Pakistan in his previous two outings.

Abhishek, meanwhile, lost his leg stump off the third delivery that he faced as Aryan Dutt, bowling brilliantly, had one skidding off the surface. Short of confidence, Abhishek missed the line of the ball completely as tried to hoist it on the on side. Delivering a fabulous spell in the Powerplay, Dutt also had Ishan Kishan bowled in a freakish way: the ball brushed off the in-form left-hander's pads and elbow before trickling on to the stumps even as he tried to stop it.

The Netherlands deserve to be complimented for the way they kept India, who were 51/2 after the Powerplay, in check in the first 15 overs before the Dube-Pandya onslaught.

Yogesh Chavda

66 Shivam Dube has recorded his maiden fifty in the T20 World Cup, bettering the 34 vs Bangladesh in North Sound on June 22, 2024. His knock is his career-best in T20Is. His previous best was 65 vs New Zealand in Vizag on Jan 28, 2026.

1 Dube's knock is an Indian record for the highest individual innings by a No. 5 batter or below in the T20 World Cup, bettering Hardik Pandya's 63 vs England in Adelaide on Nov 10, 2022.

Dutch bowler Aryan Dutt after dismissing Ishan Kishan

13 Hardik Pandya has become the 13th allrounder and the first Indian to complete the double of 6000+ runs and 200+ wickets in Twenty20.

3 Abhishek Sharma is the third opening batter to get three ducks in a T20 WC tournament. The first two are West Indies' Andrew Fletcher in 2009 and Bangladesh's Tanzid Hasan in 2024. Three other batters have recorded three ducks in a T20 WC competition — Scotland's Richie Berrington in 2021-22, Zimbabwe's Regis Chakabva in 2022-23 and Uganda's Roger Mukasa in 2024.

4 Abhishek is the fourth batter to register three successive ducks in the T20 World Cup, the first three being India's Ashish Nehra between 2010 and 2016, Fletcher in 2009 and Mukasa in 2024.

5 Abhishek is the second Indian batter to get 5 ducks in 8 innings in a calendar year. Sanju Samson had registered five ducks in 12 innings in 2024.

SCOREBOARD

India: A Sharma b Dutt 0, I Kishan b Dutt 18, T Varma c van der Merwe b van Beek 31, S Yadav c sub (van der Gugten) b Klein 34, S Dube c sub (van der Gugten) b van Beek 66, Hardik Pandya c van der Merwe b van Beek 30, R Singh not out 6; **Extras: (lb), (w7) (6 wkts) Total: (6 wkts) 193; FoW:** 1-0, 2-39, 3-68, 4-110, 5-148, 6-186; **Bowling:** Dutt 4-0-19-2, van Beek 4-0-66-3, Ackermann 2-0-26-0, Klein 4-0-38-1, de Leede 4-0-25-0, Roelof van der Merwe 1-0-15-0.

Netherlands: M Levitt c Sundar b Pandya 24, M O'Dowd b Chakravarthy 20, B de Leede c Chakravarthy b Dube 35, C Ackermann c Rinku b Chakravarthy 21, A Dutt b Chakravarthy 0, S Edwards b Bumrah 15, Z Lion-Cachet c Sundar b Dube 26, N Croes not out 25, L van Beek not out 4; **Extras: (lb), w4) 6; Total: (7 wkts) 176; FoW:** 1-35, 2-51, 3-54, 4-94, 5-112, 6-125, 7-172; **Bowling:** Arshdeep 3-0-22-0, Bumrah 3-0-17-1, Sundar 4-0-36-0, Chakravarthy 3-0-14-3, Pandya 3-0-46-1, Abhishek 1-0-18-0, Dube 3-0-35-2.

Result: India won by 17 runs

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SL vs Zim: Who will top Group B?

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With Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe having both secured their spots in the Super 8s, Thursday's fixture in Colombo may look like a mere formality. However, the winner of this clash will finish as the Group 'B' topper. Sri Lanka want confirmation of their dominance. Zimbabwe, on the other hand, seek validation of belief.

Zimbabwe weren't meant to be here. Yet, they stand tall after their 25-run ambush of Australia that cracked Group 'B' wide open. When rain washed away their clash against Ireland, it effectively sealed Australia's fate.

Opener Brian Bennett, potentially seen as Zimbabwe's finest batter in the last decade, has been their talisman in this campaign. Pacer Blessing Muzarabani's four-wicket demolition of Australia transformed Zimbabwe from hopeful participants to giant-slayers.

Sri Lanka's journey to the Super 8s has been smoother. Dominant wins over Oman and Ireland showcased control while an emphatic eight-wicket dismantling of Australia underlined their credentials. Captain Dasun Shanaka will not allow complacency to creep in.

2 Sri Lanka have won both their T20 WC fixtures vs Zimbabwe — by 14 runs (D/L method) in Providence on May 3, 2010 and by 62 runs in Hambantota on Sept 18, 2012.

Photo: Rajesh Kumar

Farhan ton takes Pak to Super 8s

Tariq, Other Spinners Come Good In Big 102-Run Win Against Namibia

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Chennai: It was a potential banana-skin encounter that could have completely derailed Pakistan's T20 World Cup campaign. But opener Sahibzada Farhan ensured that nothing on those lines happened as Pakistan demolished Namibia at the SSC in Colombo by 102 runs to make the Super 8s.

Farhan (100 not out off 58 balls) is a powerful player and didn't repeat the mistake he made against India at the Premadasa last Sunday. The right-hander allowed himself to get used to the pace of the wicket after captain Salman Ali Agha did a bit of course correction and chose to bat first.

In the first six overs, Pakistan scored 62 and Farhan was going at a strike-rate of 110. But the good thing about the 2009 champions was that they were not panicking as they did against India or even the Netherlands.

After a decent start with Saim Ayub, which yielded 40 runs, Farhan and captain Agha kept the scoreboard moving, waiting for the right opportunities. That was presented in the ninth over by leggie Willem Myburgh. After Agha hit the first ball of the over for six, Farhan followed it up with a couple more as 22 runs came off the over, shifting the momentum. Pakistan no longer looked like a shaky unit dealing with the jitters of a must-win game.

Of course, the below-par Namibia bowling didn't put up much resistance. The pacers, bowling at 125-130 kph, often erred in line and length and Farhan feasted on the offering. The big shots flowed from his bat as he raced away to his first T20I century. While Farhan's collaboration with Agha yielded 67 runs off seven overs, the death knell for Namibia came during the course of the opener's partnership with Shadab Khan for the fourth wicket.

Both looked in belligerent mood, swept ferociously against the spinners and Namibia, with nothing to play for, completely lost the plot. Farhan completed his century in the last over as his partnership with Shadab produced 81 runs off 40 balls.

On a pitch where there was enough help for spinners, a chase of 200 was always beyond Namibia. Leggie Shadab (2/19) brushed aside his India disappointment to get among the wickets, but the icing on the cake was provided by mystery spinner Usman Tariq.

With every passing game, he is looking a better bowler and the best part about his bowling is that he doesn't lose control in his effort to dish out variety. Namibia had absolutely no answer to Tariq's guile as he ran away with 4/36 to bring a quick end to Namibia innings.

SCORES: Pakistan 199/3 (Farhan 100*, Agha 38; Brassell 2-38) beat **Namibia 97 in 17.3 overs** (Steenkamp 23; Tariq 4-16, Shadab 3-19) by 102 runs.

102 Pakistan's triumph is their biggest by runs in T20 World Cup, eclipsing their victory by 82 runs vs the Netherlands at Lord's on June 9, 2009.

199/3 Pakistan's second highest total in T20 World Cup behind the 201 for five vs Bangladesh at Eden Gardens, Kolkata on March 16, 2016.

100 An unbeaten knock off 58 balls by Sahibzada Farhan is his maiden hundred in T20Is. His previous best was 80* vs Sri Lanka in Rawalpindi on Nov 22, 2025.

2 Farhan is the second Pakistani batter to hit a century in T20 WC. The first was Ahmed Shehzad, who hit 111* vs Bangladesh in Mirpur on March 30, 2014.

57 Balls taken by Farhan to race to his hundred, the quickest by a Pakistani batter, bettering the 58 balls taken by Shehzad.

TIMELY KNOCK: Pakistan's Sahibzada Farhan celebrates his century against Namibia

Our goal? Win World Cup, says Pak's Shadab

Colombo: Shadab Khan said Pakistan believed they could go on and win the T20 World Cup after their best performance of the tournament. "We didn't take this game lightly after so much talk about one match against India," said Shadab.

"We are on the right track to achieve the goal of winning the World Cup and we are following a process," he added.

Shadab warned that the Super 8s, which Pakistan will begin with a match against New Zealand on Saturday, will be a step up. AGENCIES

West Indies not taking Italy lightly

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Kolkata: The West Indies are in a happy space at this moment. Not often do they show the kind of consistency that they are enjoying in the ongoing T20 World Cup. Three comfortable wins, including one against England, means they are already being counted among the contenders. The last group stage match against Italy is up next here on Thursday and batting coach Floyd Reifer says there won't be any let-up.

"We take every game seriously," Reifer said on Wednesday ahead of a round of practice. "It's another opportunity for us to keep ticking our boxes. To make sure that we are controlling the different phases in the games that we speak about in the team meetings. Tomorrow's game will be like that in terms of getting the opportunities to get accustomed."

Their leading batters have been in good form and that will help their confidence ahead of the Super 8s. Shai Hope, Shimron Hetmeyer, Sherfane Rutherford have all been among runs. Brendon King and Roman Powell too have got starts.

RASHID & CO. WANT TO GIVE TROTT A FITTING FAREWELL

Chennai: Slotted in the unforgiving 'group of death', it was always going to be an uphill battle in the T20 World Cup for Afghanistan, the semi-finalists of the last edition. Come Thursday, Afghanistan will hope to bow out on a high and give departing head coach Jonathan Trott a fitting farewell when they face Canada here.

Asked what went wrong in their campaign, skipper Rashid Khan said Afghanistan failed to make the right calls at the crunch moments.

"Overall, I feel we played some good cricket and you can't really say things went wrong for us. I think it's just a matter of ending up on the losing side in that game against South Africa, which was a very important game for us. But I think we haven't made smart decisions when we are under pressure," Rashid said.

Rashid was full of praise for Trott, saying the coach played a major role in propelling the team in the right direction. "It's Trott's last game on Thursday with us. He has been someone who has taken Afghanistan cricket to where it is now." PTI

Bosch shines as SA record dominant win

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New Delhi: Cricket runs in the blood of the Bosch family. Tertius Bosch was a former South African international and his sons, Corbin and Kathan, also play the game. Thirty-three years after Tertius made his debut for South Africa in their first-ever World Cup appearance in 1992, his elder son, Corbin, is not only emulating his dad but also proving to be a match-winner for the Proteas.

Under overcast conditions here at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on Wednesday, Bosch produced an intimidating spell of fast bowling to claim 3/12 from his four overs and set up South Africa's six-wicket win over a struggling UAE.

Bosch's performance with the ball halted the momentum of the UAE innings, which had shown early enterprise, and they only managed 122/6. A short rain interruption delayed the South African chase but they made short work of it by coasting home in just 13.2 overs, losing four wickets.

Dewald Brevis seized the opportunity to make some welcome runs before the Super 8 clash against India on Sunday with a sparkling 26-ball 56 as the Proteas made it four wins out of four in the group stage.

Having lived in the shadow of his more famed pace-bowling contemporaries, the 31-year-old Bosch got the opportunity to showcase his prowess when South Africa decided to rest two of their frontline pacers, Lungi Ngidi and Marco Jansen, and made four changes to their playing XI in an inconsequential tie.

Bosch strangled the UAE batters by peppering them with short balls, at over 140 kmph, directed at the body.

Though UAE's top scorer Alishan Sharafu (46 off 38) held one end up, he failed to accelerate. Sharafu was also at the receiving end of Bosch's devastating pace as one of his deliveries crashed into his helmet and sent his neck guard flying. Though Bosch should have had Sharafu off the very next ball, the chance was floored by Anrich Nortje at third-man, one of the four catches dropped by South Africa on the field.

Bosch lost his dad early as Tertius passed away at the age of 34. But he admitted that he was happy to carry on the family legacy. "My dad had his own legacy. I think I'm a little bit slower than what he was. Trying to be as fast as he is. But he was an incredible man. I've aspired to be the human being that he was," Bosch Jr said.

SCORES: South Africa 125/4 in 13.2 overs (Brevis 56, Rickelton 30) beat **UAE 122/6** (Sharafu 45; Bosch 3-12, Nortje 2-26) by 6 wkts.

Prya Bhattacharjee

Corbin Bosch takes a wicket in Delhi

40 Balls remaining when South Africa cantered to a six-wicket win, their third biggest triumph in terms of balls to spare in the T20 World Cup, the two largest being 67 balls remaining while registering a nine-wicket victory vs Afghanistan in Tarouba on June 26, 2024 and 44 balls to spare while defeating Zimbabwe by 10 wickets in Hambantota on Sept 20, 2012.

3/12 Corbin Bosch has produced his best bowling performance in the T20 World Cup and his second best in T20Is behind the 4/14 vs Pakistan in Rawalpindi on Oct 28, 2025.

'Baby AB' Brevis unfazed by Chakravarthy threat

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New Delhi: India and South Africa are bracing up for a mouth-watering Super 8 clash in the T20 World Cup in Ahmedabad on Sunday. With both sides having quite a few match winners, the game offers plenty of match-ups. One of them could possibly involve India's mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy and South Africa's rising batting star **Dewald Brevis**.

Asked about the tantalising battle ahead after his team's six-wicket win over the UAE here, Brevis, who usually bats at No 4, sounded dismissive of the threat posed by Chakravarthy. "He is a spin bowler, so I will play him like a spinner. Watch the ball and react to it," he said.

Though Brevis didn't have an impressive run during South African team's limited overs tour of India last year — scoring just 89 runs at an average of 17 — he never got out to Chakravarthy in the four T20I games.

Ever since he burst on to the scene with his exploits in the U-19 World Cup in 2022, where he finished as the tour nament's leading run-getter (506 runs from six games), Brevis has had to live with the moniker of 'Baby AB', as he is often compared to Proteas great AB de Villiers. It's a tag he enjoys. "It's always been a very big privilege for me to be compared with AB. But it's never been any pressure for me. It's always been an honour," said Brevis.

Prya Bhattacharjee

Against India, Brevis will hope to summon the experience of playing in the Indian Premier League (IPL) for Chennai Super Kings and Mumbai Indians. The South African team's special consultant, Albie Morkel, has labelled the 22-year-old as the team's "X-factor" ahead of the highly-anticipated Super 8clash.

After scores of 6, 23 and 21 in the first three matches of the T20 World Cup, Brevis showed glimpses of his potential with a brief, entertaining innings of 36 off 25 balls, studded with three glorious sixes, against UAE on Wednesday. While he got out with his side seven runs short of the target, Brevis is unfazed.

"It's just about being myself and enjoying the game, and usually the best things happen after that. Being consistent in that performance is not always guaranteed. We all go through ups and downs. It's just about being positive and backing your style of play," he said.

J&K DARE TO DREAM UNDER PRESSURE

THE PIONEERS: J&K team members pose after making it to the Ranji Trophy final

Cricket Always Gives You A Second Chance, Says Coach Ajay Sharma

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RANJI TROPHY

Kalyani: One clean swing, one red ball sailing into the stands, and a 67-year wait finally snapped. The moment overnight batter Vanshaj Sharma launched Bengal pacer Mukesh Kumar for six, Jammu and Kashmir's players, support staff and officials spilled onto the field at the Bengal Cricket Academy (BCA) ground here on Wednesday, turning a quiet Kalyani morning into a roar that could be heard all the way to the Himalayan state.

With that hit, J&K sealed a first-ever spot in the Ranji Trophy final, the biggest step the state has taken in India's premier domestic red-ball cricket competition. A region once famous for the Kashmir willow, now was etching a chapter of its own into the annals.

The result, a six-wicket win, was emphatic, even though there were moments when the match appeared to be slipping away from their grasp. Set 126 for victory, J&K completed the chase in 31.4 overs, getting it done before lunch on Day Four.

"It's nothing new for me as I have played the Ranji final as a player a number of times. But believe me, this time it's different. I had not slept for the last three nights. Today I will sleep well, I will sleep content," an elated J&K coach and former Delhi batter Ajay Sharma, once a stalwart of the domestic scene, said.

J&K resumed within touching distance, only 83 runs away, yet Bengal came hard at them. Akash Deep, already among the wickets, struck twice to remove Shubham Khajuria and Yawar Hassan and then returned to send back skipper Paras Dogra. Mohammed Shami, relentless as ever, bowled Shubham Pundir to briefly widen the doorway for a comeback. But Abdul Samad and Sharma shut it with authority — an unbeaten 55-run fifth-wicket partnership that carried J&K to the line without another stumble. Samad's unbeaten 30 off 27 balls, studded with three sixes, provided the finishing fire. Sharma's 43 not out off 85 balls supplied the composure.

The semi-final had turned on J&K's refusal to panic after conceding a first-innings lead. Bengal piled up 328, powered by Sudip Kumar Gharami's superb 148, and then had J&K out for 302 in reply, with Shami ripping through the innings with 8/50. Yet J&K stayed within reach through Samad's counter-attacking 82, Dogra's 68 and valuable lower-order runs that kept the deficit to 26.

Very few might have expected J&K to flip that deficit into a ticket to the final. But Sharma insisted the belief never wavered. "I told the boys that the match is not over. We have two more days. Cricket always gives you a second chance. Red-ball cricket is a dangerous game," the 61-year-old Sharma said.

The final is near, and J&K have earned the right to dream it all the way.

Brief scores: J&K 302 (Samad 82, Shami 8-50 & 126/4 (Vanshaj 43, Samad 30*, Akash Deep 3-46) beat Bengal 328 (Gharami 148, Nabi 5-87) & 98 (Shahbaz 24, Sunil 4-27, Nabi 4-36) by 6 wickets.

Big leap has been long in the making

Archiman.Bhaduri@timesofindia.com

Kalyani: History had barely settled in when the phone rang. A familiar face flashed up on a video call. Minutes after Jammu and Kashmir sealed a spot in the Ranji Trophy final, the team heard from BCCI president Mithun Manhas, a former head of the J&K cricket's ad-hoc committee. It was fitting.

J&K first entered the Ranji Trophy in the 1969-70 season. For decades they were treated as plucky participants, rarely as genuine threats. The transformation into a side that now talks — and plays — like title contenders has had Manhas' imprint on it.

"We have done it, Mithun," J&K coach Ajay Sharma shouted out on the phone. "Mithun and I go back a long way. He made his debut for Delhi under me. I know how hard he had worked for this."

There is a fairy-tale quality to J&K's rise as a cricketing power: overcoming odds, brushing aside doubts, and learning the most important skill of all — self-belief. But this isn't a story built on romance alone. It has also been shaped by method, patience and the hard labour of building a culture.

Former Delhi player Sharma himself admits he struggled to get a grip when he first took charge before the 2022-23 season. "When I joined for the first time, I was handling 30 boys. I was alone then," Sharma said.

SPOTLIGHT

> Initially it was challenging because it was a very different culture in J&K. It took me around two years to understand these kids. It took time to bond with them. But today they see me as an elder brother.
> — Ajay Sharma | J&K COACH

The set-up looks very different now. J&K have a bowling coach in P Krishnakumar and Dishant Yagnik as their fielding coach. These are small additions on paper, significant ones in a dressing room trying to grow into a winning unit.

"Initially it was challenging because it was a very different culture in J&K. It took me around two years to understand these kids. It took time to bond with them," he said. "I was hard on them initially. But today they see me as an elder brother."

The first shift, Sharma believes, had to happen in the mind. "There were only think about white-ball cricket and the IPL. We have players from the state in the IPL. But Mithun, as J&K cricket administrator, had a vision and that is to win the Ranji trophy. Ranji trophy still remains the country's premier tournament. If you do well here your name goes ahead," Sharma said.

From there, the work became more deliberate: identify a core and keep backing it. A group of 24-25 boys began to take shape — some, like left-arm pacer Sunil Kumar, emerging through talent-hunt competitions. "It's the same bunch which has developed as we kept giving them confidence," Sharma stated.

Alongside confidence came ambition — not the loud, throwaway kind, but something planted carefully and watered over seasons. "I slowly made them understand that you are all talented guys and you are all around 19-20 years of age. You have the game in you so if you apply a little, you can play for India," he said.

Infrastructure, too, mattered. J&K's push included pitch preparation, with Sharma noting the state now has both black and red soil pitches, a rare advantage for a side looking to be versatile at home and resilient away.

Preparation became a season-defining theme. "Pre-season is very important and we started playing the Dachi Baba (in Chennai) for the last two-three years," Sharma pointed out. Facing bigger sides there, and surviving those examinations, helped the group believe it could beat anyone.

"J&K has become a team to reckon with. Everybody is scared of playing J&K now," Sharma thundered. "We have all bases covered having both quality fast bowlers and spinners. We have won almost the knockout matches away from home."

Dismantling Kashmir, Jammu factions was important

Irfan Pathan

The first thing that struck me when I went to Jammu and Kashmir as mentor-cum-player in 2018 was the desire in to excel in the younger bunch of players. They were hungry for more opportunity. They wanted someone to guide them. I was lucky to play a part in that journey.

I actually compare their mentality with that of up-and-coming Mumbai cricketers. If you are coming from Jogeshwari or Andheri, you have to go to the town, taking a local train with a kit bag. You take two hours to reach the ground. You have to make sure you have full concentration when you get your chance. That's the mindset Mumbai Cricket has. The same spirit drives J&K.

There was one area that needed to be fixed immediately. When I actually went for the first selection meeting, there were two sections — Jammu and Kashmir. We made sure only talented players get to play. It didn't matter if we created a whole team from Jammu or from Kashmir.

There were two selectors from Jammu who were only talking about Jammu boys. And two selectors from Kashmir were only talking about Kashmiri boys. Talent can come from any district, any state so long as it's your state. I tore that sheet of the first selection meeting because people were not open minded.

Getting the right infrastructure was a big thing. The guys had to be taken to turf pitches from matting pitches. Taking a roller and all the facilities to the districts was a long haul with that kind of infrastructure. The players' hunger helped them come up. We made sure in those two years, 65-80,000 cricketers played cricket. We started league cricket all around the state. There were 24 districts involved. Fast bowlers like Rikshik Salaam and Umran Malik came in. Aqeib Nabi was part of junior cricket at that time as well. It was important for us to get him to the top of the tree in first-class cricket as well. So creating eight or 10 guys in terms of a fast bowling pool was very important.

I am really happy the way things have gone. I hope they create history by lifting the Ranji Trophy. I just can't wait for that to happen.

(As told to Arunai Basu)

Smaran Scores Another Century, Rahul Shines

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SEMIFINAL

Lucknow: By lunch on Day 4, Karnataka had effectively booked their place in the Ranji Trophy final. On Wednesday at the Ekana Cricket Stadium here, the eight-time champions treated much of the remainder as extended batting practice ahead of next week's title clash against Jammu and Kashmir.

Uttarakhand, resuming at 149/5, were bundled out for 233 in 90 minutes. Karnataka, instead of enforcing the follow-on, chose to rest their bowlers and give their batters time in the middle.

By stumps on the penultimate day, Karnataka had surged to 299/6 in 68.5 overs in their second innings, swelling the overall lead to a staggering 802 runs.

The day began with Karnataka polishing off Uttarakhand's resistance swiftly. In reply, Karnataka opened with Mayank Agarwal (21) and Kruthik Krishna (62). Mayank fell at the stroke of lunch, edging Abhay Negi to wicketkeeper Saurabh Rawat. The post-lunch session saw a brief wobble as Shreyas Gopal (0) and Karun Nair (8) departed in quick succession, momentarily slowing the tempo.

Kruthik, however, continued his impressive run, bringing up his second successive half-century. But just as he looked set for more, he misread Anneesh Sudha's googly and was trapped in front.

Karnataka seal final berth

TOP KNOCK: R Smaran celebrates after completing his ton on Wednesday

From there, R Smaran and KL Rahul combined to toy with an increasingly weary Uttarakhand attack. Rahul, aggressive from the outset, raced to 70 not out off 67 balls, peppering the boundary with three fours and five sixes. He signalled his half-century by launching a Negi delivery into the long-on stands.

At the other end, Smaran showcased composure and authority. After tea, the pair accelerated, with Rahul stepping out to loft Suchith over his head for six. Smaran reached his fourth century of the season — and his second of the match — with a crisp double.

Uttarakhand's fatigue showed on the field. Chances went down, midfields crept in, and the pressure mounted. Smaran, who moved to 956 runs for the season to overtake Delhi's Ayush Doseja (949) as the leading run-getter, fell soon after reaching the milestone. Attempting a reverse sweep off Suchith, he miscued to Lakshya Raichandani at slip. Vidhyadhar Patil's dismissal in the 68th over brought an end to the day's proceedings. Karnataka also survived a scare after skipper Devdutt Padikkal took a hit on his right hand during fielding in the morning. But the fear was put to rest and if needed, he is expected to bat on Thursday.

FINAL LIKELY IN HUBBALLI

With knockout hosts determined by points accumulated in the league phase, Jammu and Kashmir will play their maiden Ranji Trophy final away from home. Karnataka, meanwhile, aim to host their first home final since 2009-10, when they lost to Mumbai in Mysuru.

The final is likely to be staged at the KSCA Rajnagar Stadium in Hubballi. The M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru is expected to be unavailable due to ongoing renovations, including gate replacements. The BCCI Centre of Excellence remains an alternative, though staging the country's premier domestic final at a training facility may not be ideal.

For now, Karnataka's focus remains clear — complete the formalities and prepare for one final push at a long-awaited ninth title.

SCOREBOARD

Karnataka (I innings): 736.

Uttarakhand (I innings, o/n 149/5): Lakshya Raichandani 55, Saurabh Rawat c Smaran b Vyshak 14, Abhay Negi c Karun b Shreyas 9, Mayank Mishra st Kruthik b Shikhar 10, Aditya Rawat (not out) 45, Jaineejay Joshi c (Sub) Aneesh b Vidhyadhar 11. **Extras:** (B-2; LB-6; NB-1; W-2) 9. **Total (all out; 88.5 overs) 233**

Fall of wickets: 6-153, 7-162, 8-171, 9-175

Bowling: Vidhyadhar Patil 15.5-3-40-3, Prasidh Krishna 18-2-62-1, Vyshak Vijaykumar 17-2-45-3, Shikhar Shetty 24-10-39-1, Shreyas Gopal 14-4-41-2.

Karnataka (II innings): Mayank Agarwal c S Rawat b Negi 21, Kruthik Krishna lbw Sudha 52, Shreyas Bw Mishra 6, Karun Nair c Suchith b Negi 8, R Smaran c Raichandani b Suchith 127, KL Rahul (batting) 70, Vidhyadhar c A Rawat b Mishra 7. **Extras:** (B-8; NB-3; LB-2; W-1) 14. **Total (6 wkts; 68.5 overs) 299**

Fall of wickets: 1-39, 2-40, 3-59, 4-122, 5-290, 6-299.

Bowling: Abhay Negi 15-7-53-2, Jaineejay Joshi 9-0-54-0, Mayank Mishra 12.5-1-37-2, Aneesh Sudha 12-1-56-1, J Suchith 12-0-39-1, Aditya Rawat 2-0-13-0, Lakshya Raichandani 1-0-3-0.

SNAP SHOTS

Alcaraz battles ahead

Carlos Alcaraz made a triumphant return to action following his Australian Open success as he beat Arthur Rinderknech 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) in the first round in Doha on Tuesday. Alcaraz saw off the 30th-ranked Rinderknech in two closely contested sets. The world number one will face another Frenchman in round two. 60th-ranked Valentin Royer. Andrey Rublev booked his place in the second round with a 6-4, 6-3 victory over Dutchman Jesper De Jong.

Anisimova & Andreeva set up quarters clash: Elena Rybakina was the latest player to join the exodus at the Dubai Open on Wednesday as she retired from her match against Antonia Ruzic, while Amanda Anisimova and Mirra Andreeva both won to set up a quarterfinal meeting. Ruzic will face Elina Svitolina after the Ukrainian beat Belinda Bencic 4-6, 6-1, 6-3. Anisimova beat Janice Tjen 6-1, 6-3. Defending champion Andreeva defeated Jaqueline Cristian 7-5, 6-3. American Jessica Pegula eliminated her 18-year-old compatriot Iva Jovic 6-4, 6-2.

Vani joins Tversa in lead: Vani Kapoor joined Tversa Malik in shared lead after carding a two-under 70 in the second round of the fourth leg of the Women's Pro Golf Tour, in Pune on Wednesday. Ridhima Dilawari, the first co-leader with Tversa, slipped to tied third after carding 1-over 72. The star of the day was Sneha Singh (67), who had a bogey-free round with four birdies between the ninth and the 13th. Sneha, who shot 73 on the first day, is now tied third with Ridhima.

Shaurya shoots tournament low of 62: Overnight leader Shaurya Bhattacharya fired a brilliant eight-under 62 in the second round to extend his lead to four shots at the DP World Players Championship 2026 at the Tollygunge Club in Kolkata on Wednesday. Shaurya (64-62) produced a bogey-free effort including an eagle and six birdies to move his total to 14-under 126. Kshitij Naveed Kaul (67-63) returned a 63 featuring an eagle, six birdies and a bogey to rise seven spots to second position at 10-under 130.

Shrivalli powers into pre-quarters

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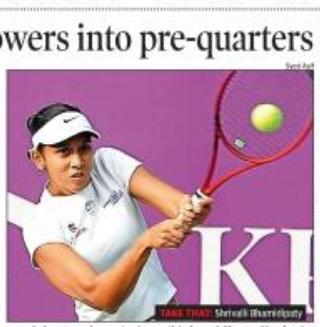
TENNIS

Bengaluru: Shrivalli Bhamidipaty came through with a strong win for India on a day when compatriots Manya Rajeshwaran Revathi and Vaidehee Chaudhari bit the dust in the ITF Women's Open at the SM Krishna tennis stadium between Wednesday.

Ranked 543 on the WTA Tour, Shrivalli, a wildcard entrant in the W100 event, scored a straight-set 7-6 (6), 6-4 win against Francesca Curmi (336) of Malta in two hours and 10 minutes. Meanwhile, qualifier Vaidehee (476) lost 4-6, 0-6 to top-seeded Talia Gibson (111) of Australia. Another wildcard, 16-year-old Manya (1073) went down 1-6, 6-1, 0-6 to Polina Iatcenko of Russia.

"I wanted to go out there, give my best, play my heart out and fight for every point. I also wanted to make her work for every point," Shrivalli said after the match. "When it mattered most (in crucial points), I held my nerves and made her hit one extra ball, and that worked."

Shrivalli and Curmi were locked in a tight contest from the outset. The Indian was broken in the third and fifth games of the opening set. However, Shrivalli, who trailed 2-4, responded strongly winning three consecutive games with a series of winners, including a service winner, to lead 5-4. Growing in confidence, she forced the set into a tie-break.



TAKE THAT: Shrivalli Bhamidipaty

Although Shrivalli missed two set points, allowing Curmi to level at 6-6, she regained composure. An ace gave her another opportunity, and Curmi's unforced error handed the Indian the opening set, which lasted one hour and 23 minutes.

Riding that momentum, Shrivalli took control of the second set, which lasted 47 minutes. She sealed the match with a love game in the tenth and set up a clash with the third seed Hanne Vandewinkel of Belgium. Earlier, Vaidehee matched Talia shot for shot in the opening set, with both players holding serve until the eighth game. The Indian had a chance to break in the seventh game when she led 40-15 but she failed to capitalise.

The 21-year-old Australian secured the only break of the set in the tenth game when Vaidehee's forehand return found the net. The second set proved straight forward for Talia, who converted her sixth match point in the 68th minute to set up a round-of-16 meeting with India No. 1 Sahaja Yamalapalli on Thursday.

Roshini was dismissed by M Revathi in the 12th over, which led to a middle-order collapse. They lost wickets at regular intervals and were reduced to 96/6. Though Soumya Venna (39) and Shreya Chavan (54n.o) battled hard, Karnataka were bundled out for 207 in 47.2 overs.

Brief scores: Pondicherry: 253/9 in 50 overs (Vinayak 85, Divya Gnanananda 65, SA Lankar 39, Vashi Pandey 2-for, Monica Patel 2-42) lost **Karnataka: 207 all out in 47.2 overs** (Rachel Kane 20, Soumya Venna 39, Shreya Chavan 54n.o, M Revathi 2-36). TNN

Karnataka go down to Pondicherry

WOMEN'S ONE DAYERS

Karnataka suffered a 46-run loss to Pondicherry in the senior women's One Day Trophy in Rajkot on Wednesday. Asked to bat, Pondicherry opener Yuvashri was off the blocks quickly. She was involved in a 73-run stand with Sonal (12), as Yuvashri contributed 55 runs. Divya Gnanananda (65) joined the opener, and another 76-run partnership put them in a good position before Yuvashri (85), who hit 13 fours, was run out by Nikl Prasad to make it 149/2 in 29.5 overs. SA Lankar (39) and Vashi Pandey (24 n.o) contributed to Pondicherry's total of 253/6 in 50 overs. Monica Patel (2/42), who sent back Divya, was the pick of the Karnataka bowlers. Karnataka openers S Shubha (23) and Roshini Kiran (28) provided a steady start. They were 46/1 after

Racism allegations mar Real's victory

FIERY GAME: Vinicius Junior (left) talks with Jose Mourinho

Vinicius Junior scored and then allegedly he had been racially abused during Real Madrid's 1-0 win away to Benfica in the first leg of their Champions League play-off tie on Tuesday, while Paris Saint-Germain came from two goals down to beat Monaco 3-2.

Elsewhere, Galatasaray stunned Juventus, beating the Italians 5-2 in Istanbul, and Borussia Dortmund seized the upper hand in their tie against Atalanta with a 3-0 first-leg victory.

FOOTBALL

Madrid headed to Lisbon to play Benfica less than three weeks after a dramatic 4-3 defeat away to the same opponents, when goalkeeper Anatoliy Trubin scored a stunning late goal to take the Portuguese side through to the knock-out stages and force Real to drop into the play-offs.

Benfica coach Jose Mourinho was hoping to again inspire his current side to victory against the club he coached from 2010 to 2013, but the night was instead overshadowed by the alleged racist abuse reported by Vinicius. The Brazilian scored early in the second half. His moment of brilliance, though, became controversial when he was booked for his dancing celebration in front of the crowd.

That booking sparked an exchange with Benfica's Gianluca Prestianni, who pulled his shirt over his mouth before appearing to say something to Vinicius.

The Real forward then ran over to referee Francois Letexier and, pointing at Prestianni, seemed to claim he had been called "mono", the Spanish word for monkey. That led to a hold-up of several minutes before the game resumed, with Vinicius then being jeered by the home fans. Mourinho was then sent off in the final stages for complaining too vociferously as he appealed for a second yellow card for Vinicius, meaning he will not be on the touchline for the second leg at the Bernabeu next week.

Results: Play-offs, first leg: Galatasaray 5 (Kerem Aktur 13, Lang 49, 75, Sanchez 60, Dzeko 86) bt Juventus 2 (Kaprassiev 16, 32); Benfica 3 (Jan Bednarek 2, Kaprassiev 16, 32); Borussia Dortmund 3 (Guirassy 3, Beier 42 (o.g.), Malatia 81); Monaco 2 (Balogun 1, Lilin 1) tie to Paris Saint-Germain 3 (Dembele 29, 67, Hakimi 42). AP

UEFA opens probe

UEFA said on Wednesday it would "investigate allegations of discriminatory behaviour" after Real Madrid forward Vinicius Junior accused Benfica's Gianluca Prestianni of racially abusing him during a Champions League match in Lisbon. Trent Alexander-Arnold said the incident had left a sour taste in the mouth. "It's disgusting. What's happened tonight is a disgrace for football. It's ruined the night for the team," he said. AP

National Cricketers vs Mathikere in final

CRICKET

Bengaluru: Mathikere Cricket Club and National Cricketers entered the final of the KSCA Group I - V division league-cum-knockout tournament here recently.

Mathikere beat Cantonment Cricketers by 98 runs as the former, batting first, managed 220/9 in 50 overs. The total proved to be enough as their bowlers dismissed the opposition for 122 runs.

The other semifinal witnessed National Cricketers hand Young Cricketers (I) a six-wicket defeat. Sunil Kumar was the architect of the win returning a four-wicket haul.

Brief scores: Semifinals: Mathikere 50: 220/9 in 50 overs (Rahul Shah 40, Kouchal D 27, Rahul Menon 27 n.o; KC Cariappa 2-31, Piyush Ganchi 2-44, Avinash Gowda 3-56) bt **Cantonment Cricketers: 122 all out in 34.3 overs** (Kouchal 55, 55; MS Dhandaga 2-25, Rahul Shetty 3-23, Chandru Aiyappa 2-32, Nagaraj Nagda 2-8).

Young Cricketers (I): 67 all out in 25.2 overs (Sunil Kumar 4-21, Madhusudan R 2-26, Prasanna Pattiliyakuran 3-34) lost to **National Cricketers: 68/4 in 22.2 overs** (Sharma 44 n.o). TNN

Jawahar Union prevail

Jawahar Union FC registered a 2-0 win over Real Chikkamagaluru FC in the BDFA 'A' division football league championship in Bengaluru on Wednesday. **Results: 'A' Div:** Bosco FC 4 (Hakeem Rodriguez Dsouza 24, Roan Joram, Joel Jo, Michael Rasak 67) tot 6 GOFC FC 0; Shield FC 3 (Gowtham Gangin 14, 90+5, Imran Khan 45+2) bt Sree Gajanana FC 0; Jesus Mathang 55-point: Jawahar Union FC 2 (Lukmanhan 58-pen, Mangguzaki Nyigan 68) bt Real Chikkamagaluru FC 0; Ranto FC 3 (Thangkhanlian Ranto 32, 34, Sajan de Souza 99+2) bt Bitto FC 0; Willow Knoll Inter FC 5 (40, 75, Ashish Gowda 3-1 Dsouza 29, 67, Hakim 45). AIFF

CITY ROUND-UP

Basketball tournay: The Karnataka State Basketball Association (KSBBA) will conduct the Mathru Cup Basketball Championship for women from Mar 5 to 8 at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru. All the affiliated district associations and member clubs can send their entries to ksbb68@gmail.com on or before Feb 25. TNN

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